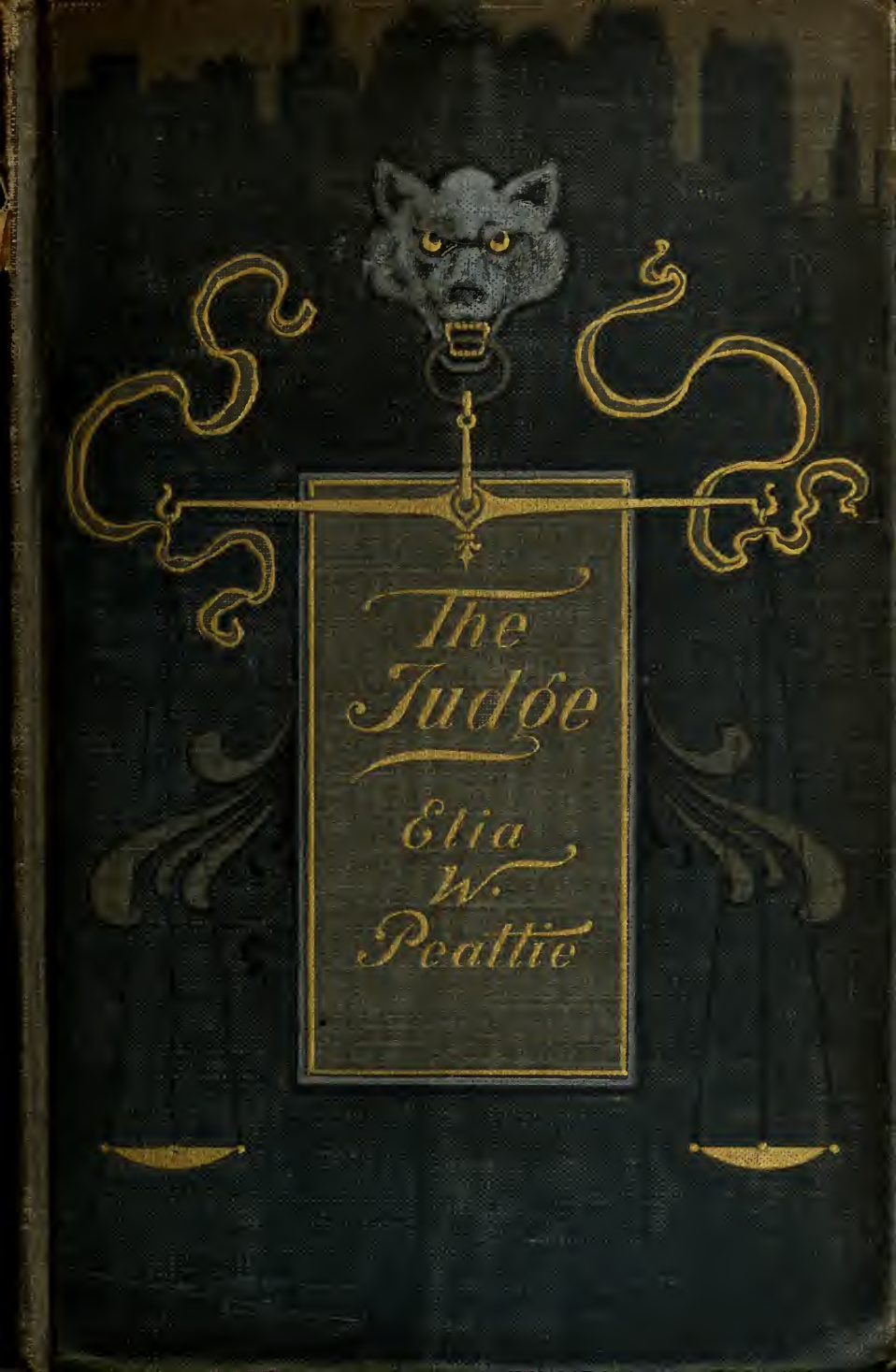

The Judge
Elia W. Peattie

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The Judge

By

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THE JUDGE.

CHAPTER I.

The long library was the favorite room in the Barthwait house. When Judge Barthwait came home from his duties at night, he was almost sure to find his daughter there. It seemed like a forecast of heaven to sit there in the twilight with Margaret. The fire, dancing between the expanse of pictured tiles, Nat, the grey hound, on the rug, the book-lined walls—next to Margaret, the treasure of the judge's heart—shimmering curtains, the burnished bronzes, the restless parrot, and Margaret with her white hands—all these, familiar as they were, seemed ever new, ever inviting, ever luxurious.

All that confidence and comradeship, which a man usually gives to his wife, the judge, long widowed, gave to his daughter, and if he guarded their communion somewhat jealously, he compensated for it by a devotion more chivalrous than fatherly in its nature.

Much as he prided himself upon his hospitality, he took it ill, if, after a day of judicial perplexities, he found a third person in the sanctuary at the hour set apart for the twilight talk.

Therefore, when he came home one stormy January night and found Margaret sitting by the fire with a stranger, it was not surprising that he should own to his annoyance with a gesture of impatience. The gas had not yet been lighted, and he could not see the features of the stranger, but by the way she sat on the edge of the leathern chair, and by the peculiar shooting forward of the head, that one sees often in the despairing, the judge knew her to be some suppliant for aid. Margaret sat opposite, idly stroking the parrot, her whole attitude expressing sympathy.

"Father," said she in a low voice, "this is the mother of the lad you sentenced yesterday."

The judge advanced with outstretched hand, a cordiality breaking through the natural hauteur of his manner.

"I am very sorry for what I had to do yesterday," he said. Pallid, abashed, bitter and none too clean, the little woman stood up and laid her nervous, bony hand in that of the judge. She could hardly believe that the voice she now heard was the same that had used such stern accents in the court-room—the court-room with its dreadful scene. But she had come prepared to accuse, and she was not to be placated by a tone.

"Yer honor," she said, with form and voice trem-

bling, "yeh may well be sorry! My son ain't ought to be sent where he's agoin.' I see the whole thing whin it happened, an' I know he wan't to blame. I ought to know, I think! If it hadn't bin fur Jim, I would be a corpse this day, sir, as I wus tellin' yer da'ter."

"Sit down," said the judge, gently pushing her toward the chair; "I am glad to have a chance to talk with you. I think I can explain matters so they will seem—"

"I don't see that there's anything to explain, yer honor," broke in the woman. "He's been sent to the penitentiary for abein' a hero, and savin' his mother's life, and you are lettin' him be punished fur it."

She had evidently prepared her speech with much thought, but she could not speak it with the indignation she had meant to use, for the tears came uppermost. She began angrily playing with a stiletto that lay on the desk. It was a dainty thing—as dainty as it was deadly—and the judge kept it among his magazines to serve as a paper knife, and as a reminder of Florence the beautiful.

"Madam," said the judge, watching the pitiful, trembling hand as it slipped the instrument in and out of its sheath, "your son's case was unfortunately handled."

"What difference would that make?" cried the woman shrilly, "ef the law was what it should be? Just listen to this, yer honor: I hed been sick a month. I come downstairs in the mornin' to git

breakfast. My husband—not the father of my boy, mind you—he hes ben dead ten year—come in an' begun growlin' because the meal wan't fixed. I was sick, an' I answered back pretty sharp. He hed ben drinkin' the night before an' agin in the mornin.' He got crazy mad in a minit an' picked up a pitchfork he hed brought in with him, and come at me like a wild beast. Jim was just comin' out of the upstairs door, an' he seed him. He tol' him to drop the fork or he'd shoot. The ole man dropped the fork an' went fur Jim. They had a tussle. They looked terrible, I can tell you! They fought 'way acrost the kitchen, an' out of the door. The ole man give Jim a push off the stoop, an' when Jim was a fallin' his fingers tightened naturally on the trigger of the revolver he had in his hand and it went off."

"Madam," said the judge patiently, "your lawyer pleaded that your son killed your husband by accident. In other words, that your husband came to his death by the accidental discharge of the revolver that was in your son's hand."

"An' he's right, sir. Then, why is my son sent away; tell me? The only support I have, and my left arm as stiff as a rail, yer honor, with the rheumatism. Accidental shooting, judge—an' then prison!"

She drew the stiletto quite out of its sheath, and played with it so recklessly that the parrot cried out, and leaped to his mistress' shoulder in alarm.

"Yes, but my dear madam, your lawyer then ne-

glected to prove that the shooting was an accident. He proved, instead, that your husband deserved to be killed. I have no doubt he did, but it muddled the case sadly, you see, and I could only recommend him to mercy, which the jury did not see fit to grant."

"Oh, its well enough to talk," said the woman, in a loud voice from which the tears had all departed. "I don't understand the points ye make, an' I don't see no justice in it. What is the law fur? Just to find excuses fur convictin' a man. Jim's a good boy, I tell you, judge, an' them as has ruined his life."

The judge motioned Margaret to leave the room. She did so with reluctance. The woman's manner made her afraid, and she could not help wishing that she would put down that stiletto. It may have been fancy, but she thought her father shared the feeling, for she saw him watching the woman's movements with a peculiar look in his eyes. The distress of the poor mother made her miserable, and all the way up to her room she battled with a sense of pain and oppression that was quite foreign to her natural gladness. However, there was an important matter to think about. She had to make a dinner toilet, for she and her father were to dine out.

Women have many delights that men know nothing about. Men, for example, do not know what it is to dress. Of course they put on clothes; but that is quite different from dressing. Were a man to be intruded upon in the midst of his toilet he might be angered, but he would not be embarrassed.

Such a pursuit has no mystery for him. But when maids, such as Margaret, dress, they draw the curtains close; they bolt the door; they move with caution, and they glance into the glass with a certain coyness. To draw on the perfumed stocking, to twist the hair afresh, watching the reflection of the moving white arms in the dimness, to pin the laces about the throat, to hide all the white embroideries under the dainty gown, and to select the bracelets from the strong-smelling cases, has a sort of mystic delight, such as a priest feels when he decks the Virgin's altar with lilies.

There was nothing sombre about Margaret, not even her dresses. She was not one of those women who look ugly and imagine they are modest. When she left her room, smelling of the roses she wore, her very walk showed that she was conscious of her roseate, symmetrical, pulsating self, and of her tender draperies. She felt a momentary chagrin that her father should pass her in the hall without noticing her.

"He will not be himself at dinner," she confided to her turquoise bracelet, as she twirled it on her arm.

She went back into the library, and was surprised to find that the room was still lighted by the high blazing fire, although the dusk had now deepened to dark. She pushed an ottoman under the chandelier with her bronzed boot and stood on tiptoe to light the gas.

As she did so she saw a sight that made her turn

pale. She put one trembling hand to her mouth to check the cry that forced itself to her lips. On the chair where she had sat before she left the room, lay her gorgeous parrot, brighter than ever for the blood that streamed over his plumage. She made herself take the bird up—right through the splendid breast-feathers was a small knife thrust.

"It was made," said Margaret in slow alarm, "by the stiletto!"

The thought of the vindictiveness that had caused the act of useless cruelty made her faint, and she could not bring herself to look at the point of the instrument which lay on the desk, once more in its sheath.

Then she went to the door and called violently for her father. He came running at her call, in his shirt sleeves and with a towel in one hand. Margaret held out the bird on her blood-stained hands.

The judge hastened to her. He looked at her with bright eyes and took her hands in his, with the dead bird between them.

"That woman," cried Margaret, choking with the dryness at her throat, "has taken her revenge on my poor Topsy! Who could have imagined she was such a murderous creature? How she must have hated you to have done such a thing!"

But Margaret saw such a fierce look in her father's eyes—such a hot and angry look—that she feared for what he would do and fell to making excuses.

"She was crazed, I suppose. It must be maddening to suffer as she does. She will always blame

you, no doubt. But my poor, gay Topsy. I am sure I did her no harm. I do not see why she should take any revenge on me. Never mind, papa dear. Do not look so vexed about it. Despair makes one do queer things. Let go of my hands; I am not frightened."

But the judge let go with a strange reluctance, and when he did he took the bird and examined the wound by the light, as if he were very loth indeed to give up the saucy pet.

He parted the feathers over the wound and thrust his fingers into it, and took the poor dead thing to his room at length, saying that it should have a funeral of state in the morning.

In a few moments he was down again, and helped Margaret on with her cloak in the hall. His anger was quite gone, and the short ride in the carriage was as gay as such a ride could be. Margaret, who could never bear to cherish the remembrance of anything disagreeable, exerted herself in her discursive and jocular way, and the judge laughed louder and oftener than Margaret remembered hearing him do for a long time.

The house they entered was one of a uniform and severe block. But its uniformity and its severity ceased when the door was passed. The interior bore the impress of a peculiar individuality. The room that Margaret and the judge were ushered into by the rotund butler seemed to be filled with violins. They hung on the walls, they laid on shelves, they stood on the floor, and one with a

mosaic of pearls in its rich old sides, was strung from an easel. The deep polished woods of the room seemed to take their tints from the cases of the precious instruments, and glowed with dull beauty. The very curtains at the doors flung down a splendor of golden brown tints, that reflected the gleam of the Stradivarius above the mantel. On the floor lay rugs of Persian weaving, and the chairs of antique carving, the bronzes on the mantel, and the very pipes on the table, brown and shining as the violins, marked it the home of a collector of the curios.

Three men and one woman were in this room before the blaze in the fireplace. Margaret, unwinding a thing of fleeciness from her head as she went, ran forward.

"Mrs. McCook," she said softly to the lady, "I am going to kiss you on both cheeks."

Then she stretched out her hands to a venerable old man with beautiful white hair.

"And you, Uncle Leiter, are to kiss me on both cheeks."

Then she swept a bow to one of the young men on the hearth with a smile as bland as a summer evening. Just at that moment the clasps on her long cloak seemed to get in a frightful snarl. It took both of her hands and both of her eyes to attend to them, and so it was quite impossible that she should pay any tribute of respect to the second young man on the hearth. But he was a generous and forgiving young man, and in spite of the con-

tumely with which Mistress Margaret treated him, he came forward to take the cloak when those riotous clasps had at last been subjected. But for all of his pains he got only the slightest nod of thanks. The elderly lady mused to herself:

"She is not very well bred, considering the advantages she has had."

And the young man who looked like the lady, frowned also, but it may not have been for the same reason. The judge and his white-haired old friend saw nothing at all, after the manner of persons of their age and sex; but as for the young man who had been slighted, he was radiant. He seemed to charge the air with a sort of glad magnetism, that every one felt in one way or another, and though he sat down on the opposite side of the fire from Margaret he seemed to himself, to her and to every one else, to be communing with her alone. He said nothing at all, however, although one would have supposed him to be a gay, if not a reckless, talker to judge from his quizzical eyes, his dashing carriage of the head and his quick movements.

"Harry and I," said the old man, looking lovingly in the direction of this slighted but obviously happy young man, "have passed the whole of this long day here together in this room. Harry has been reading me his new play. I haven't laughed so much since I was a boy. Really, Barthwait, I wish we might have it read again this evening."

The company, with one accord, threw up their hands in protest.

"This looks to me like a conspiracy," cried the judge, "when I come here to dine with the oldest and dearest friend I have on earth, am I to learn that I am to pay a price for my dinner? Is it a trap laid by you and Harry to catch the unwary?"

"Or perhaps," said the elderly lady, unfurling an enormous feather fan, and waving it at the white-haired host, "you will kindly listen while my son William repeats his argument in the case of the State vs. McPherson. It was a brilliant thing, I assure you."

"That same brilliant effort cost me my dear Topsy, my parrot, if you please, Mrs. McCook, and I refuse to listen to it. If I had not washed my hands over and over again, you would see them dripping blood at this moment."

The judge got up to examine a Nicholas Amati that hung near him on the wall. Margaret told the story of the distracted mother who came to arraign the judge with the evasions of the law and how she had taken revenge on the pretty innocent.

"Was she alone in the room with the parrot?" inquired the young man to whom her remarks had been reproachfully addressed.

"Of course she was," cried Margaret. "You do not suppose that papa would stand by and see my Topsy murdered, do you?"

"It was odd that she took the trouble to sheath the stiletto again. Are you sure she did it with the stiletto?"

"Well, she was handling it all the evening. I

suppose the idea came into her head suddenly. She wanted to take her misery out on some one or something, and the parrot was the only thing at hand."

"Did you return to the room after the thing had occurred, Judge Barthwait?"

"Now, William Wendell McCook," said Margaret with a saucy shake of her head, "you are not to imagine that because you are attorney for Cook county that it is necessary for you to toil day and night at your occupation. The subject I introduced was a dull one. I beg Mrs. McCook's pardon for having been so stupid as to do it. Papa looks bored. He gets tired of heavy subjects. We might better have had Mr. Leiter's play even. Please let us talk nonsense."

"There is no time," said the host, rising as the butler whispered to him, "for dinner is ready. Judge, you will be glad to take Mrs. McCook to the dining room. Margaret, my sweetheart, you will come with me."

They led the way, and the two young men straggled behind, silently.

Mrs. McCook was given the head of the table, as a matter of course. Her son, the states attorney and the judge occupied one side of the table. The host, sitting at the foot, smiled upon Margaret, whom he had placed by the side of his beloved nephew, Harry.

But Margaret did not address her neighbor. Instead, she lavished the most winning smiles upon her host, paying an attention to his needs that would

have been beautiful had it been prompted by reverence. Not infrequently she cast a glance of pride across at her father.

The judge was barely 50. He was by nature an analyst and a student. He had never in his life performed a duty in a perfunctory way. He had canvassed the opinions of men of all nations, persuasions and religions. He had a genius, if it can so be expressed, for sympathy. His power for putting himself in the place of the men who stood before him for justice had won for him a reputation for astuteness that none surpassed. Nature had moulded him physically upon a noble scale. He was much larger than the majority of Americans, and even at his present age, he had not lost all trace of that athletic development of which he had once been so proud. But the tender eyes of Margaret could see that of late the mental was triumphing over the physical. It showed in the brightness of his eyes. It was apparent even in the attitude he habitually took with his head a little on one side, drooping upon his hand. His sedentary and reflective life, coupled with his intensely sympathetic nature, were beginning to tell upon him and to reduce his animal force. But tonight no sign of that fatigue which had worried his daughter was visible. He had a rested and contented air that made her rejoice, and she tried not to see that his eyes were overbright. He knew his value as a story-teller, and employed himself in retailing some which were fresh to his auditors.

He told a round half-dozen of his best tales at dinner, and, indeed, had the conversation quite to himself.

There was no wine, and all left the table together. As they were leaving the dining room, Harry Leiter found a chance to whisper to Margaret:

"I suppose you know our night-blooming cereus will open this evening. I am going to the conservatory."

Ten miuntes later Margaret stood under a glass dome. Tropical trees threw long, luxurious leaves above. Banks of ferns as high as her waist were around her. Long grasses and a tangle of exquisite vines swathed her feet. The song of the fountain was in her ears, and in her nostrils the magnificent scent of the great flower, which stood before her, breaking its sheath with heaven-born strength. Harry Leiter leaned against a vine-covered pillar. Though the swinging lantern threw a crimson glow, his face was pale. The wonderful flower flung out a leaf with a joyous power. A stream of perfume rippled through the room. A tender straining could be heard among the pure petals. The ferns, the palms, the grasses, the lilies, the blazing poinsettia lifted up their heads to listen. The fountain sank to a pianissimo. It seemed as if the flower was an offering upon the altar of the Most High. It was like a hymn of thanksgiving. Harry moved forward, his eyes upon the chaste blossom.

"It is from God," he whispered, laying one hand softly upon Margaret's head, "like my love for you."

CHAPTER II.

A minute later, and all the guests were in the conservatory. The host sat down near the flower, leaning his long, white hands upon the curiously carved cane he carried, and watched the opening leaves with the passion of an artist. The judge watched it too, but his thoughts wandered, and Mrs. McCook knew he was following her with his eyes when she gathered up her voluminous black satin skirts and ran after the pink-eyed rabbit that their entrance had startled from its slumbers. The judge and Mrs. McCook had been acquainted for years. Indeed, her deceased husband had been one of the judge's colleagues. They dined together a dozen times a year, and they had a feeling akin to relationship.

Mrs. McCook and Judge Barthwait both had a way of looking upon their friend, the collector, with certain tender pity. To their more practical natures his dreaminess, his love of music, of perfume, of jewels, all seemed a part of a sort of beautiful effeminacy. Though he was much older than either of them, they looked upon him as a child with child's caprices and innocence.

But they differed in regard to their friend's nephew, Harry. The very qualities that made Mrs. McCook admire and cherish the older man, made her regard the younger one with contempt. This

young man, whom his uncle had adopted when he was a mere lad, had never, according to Mrs. McCook, arrived at manhood. Though he had had the opportunity, he had never taken up any profession; he had not even finished his college course. Instead he spent his time writing madrigals. When he should have been studying for the law or for the practice of medicine, or electricity, or religion, or some other necessary science, he was wasting his time upon vers de societe, as frivolous as utter aimlessness could make them. He had been known to write verses for burlesque actresses, and of late he had taken to writing extravaganzas. That a man could own that he followed such pursuits and still hold his head high was a mystery to Mrs. McCook, whose son had risen with marvelous rapidity until he was elected attorney for the state of Illinois. To be sure, he was eight years older than Harry Leiter, but it was quite evident that eight years—no, nor sixteen—would never make a man of affairs out of Harry. He was a confirmed Bohemian, and she had heard it whispered that he was not free from the vices of Bohemia. However, the old collector always boasted proudly, but with an affectation of anger, that Harry would never take a cent from him, and that the young upstart insisted on paying for everything he got, quite as if he, his uncle, were a boarding-house keeper. That a mere writer of snatches and triolets should dare to live as well as William Wendell McCook, the brilliant young states attorney, was a thorn in the side of

the proud mother. She was forced to admit to herself that the society of this devil-may-care minstrel of later days was sought by some personages who would have cared nothing for the distinguished company of the attorney. His official greatness would have meant nothing to them. That a lad who could do nothing more than scribble a few tiresome verses about a lady's veil, or make a mock of some very respectable and time-honored institutions, should be esteemed a pleasant companion by clever persons was a mystery that Mrs. McCook could not fathom.

But a woman of 49, still handsome, with manners that were a standing reproach to a younger generation, could not be expected to remain forever content with the incidental pleasures she derived from the greatness of her son. This evening Mrs. McCook was wondering whether the judge did not watch her with brighter eyes than the bonds of friendship should call for.

"Margaret is a sweet girl," said the widow to herself, "but a daughter, however affectionate, is not a wife."

Age had certainly touched the judge lightly. In his elegant evening dress, with his iron-grey hair brushed back from his splendid brow, his haughty, refined and astute features outlined by the masses of greenness behind him, his eyes snapping with a sort of magnetic brightness, he wore a look of power and dignity that might well thrill a more idealistic woman than his old friend.

Margaret and Harry stood near together. The room was dusky and no one could see that his fingers were twisted in the soft silk of her gown. Margaret managed to keep up a jesting with McCook who stood near.

Harry still preserved his unaccountable silence. He stood with his eyes half closed, watching the laboring flower. His head was raised in that peculiar way that always reminded Margaret of Landseer's stag at bay.

"The consequence of all this will be a bad poem in *Life* on the night-blooming cereus," reflected McCook to himself, with a curl of the lip, which he changed into a smile when he found the eye of Margaret upon him. He strolled down to the far end of the conservatory and waited there for a while as if trying to think of something. From out his shadowy recess he could fix his eyes upon Margaret without being seen. What he saw filled him with an angry excitement. He fumed there silently until speech became a necessity. He came back to where Harry and Margaret were standing, and broke out with:

"It seems to me that such silence is remarkable on the part of our host. May I ask the occasion of it?"

Harry turned on him with a characteristic movement.

"I have not the honor to be host here this evening, Mr. McCook. That pleasure belongs to my uncle. I am never anything but a guest here."

"That will be changed some day, no doubt," said McCook, in a voice that only Harry and Maragret could hear. "The time will come when you will be master," and he smiled insinuatingly. The blood rushed to Harry's face. He threw a glance at McCook that nothing but the effrontery of much experience could have returned unabashed. Margaret laid her hand on Harry's arm.

"Mr. McCook cannot know how offensive that remark must sound," she said softly.

"This is an age, Miss Barthwait, when we must all look out for the main chance. What does one live in Chicago for but to look after the main chance? I do it myself and blame no one else for doing it," persisted the attorney.

"I do not understand your remarks, Mr. McCook," said Harry, with his eyes flashing. "Pardon me, while I go in search of an ottoman for Miss Barthwait. I want you to look over into the heart of the flower," he said to Margaret. Then he rushed out of the conservatory to choke back the anger that was rapidly getting the better of his discretion.

"Mr. Leiter seems to be particularly sensitive on the subject I broached," said the smiling attorney when Harry had left.

"Do not be absurd," said Margaret, turning a frank face on him. "We three have known each other for years. What sense is there in acting as if we were strangers? One would think to hear the way you spoke to Harry just now that you were a gentleman in a French comedy, and had just made

his acquaintance, and were determined to act the villain. You know as well as I do that he is the most unselfish fellow in the world. Why do you speak to Harry as if you hated him? I am sure you can have no cause. If you and Harry have any misunderstanding, for heaven's sake go in the other room and have it out with him. Harry will not avoid you; but do not be mysterious."

"This world contains much more mystery than you know anything about, Miss Barthwait. If you have not come across it yet, you are very fortunate."

"Well, never mind all that. What have you got against Harry? I did not think you could purposely hurt his feelings."

"I seem to have hurt yours at the same time, Miss Barthwait."

"Of course you did. I never could find any excuse for any one who was disagreeable. Is there not enough trouble in this world without gratuitous misery? I mean to be happy as long as I can, and I have a grudge against any one who makes me lose one moment of happiness."

"Then you have a grudge against me? What can I do? How may I be forgiven?" He leaned forward till his face was within a few inches of Margaret's. She feigned, as any delicate woman would have done, not to notice it, and drew away from him as if by accident.

"By telling Harry you meant nothing by your words, and by treating your friends with less suspicion in the future."

"If I must humble myself to Mr. Leiter in order to obtain your kindly regards, then they will be obtained at a high price for me."

Margaret gave an impatient toss of the hands.

"Humble yourself, Mr. McCook? I never humbled myself in my life, but there have been many occasions when I have owned myself mistaken. I cannot imagine what has come over you lately!"

"You have known me as long as you have Mr. Leiter, I think, Miss Barthwait?"

"Yes. Why?"

"Because if that is the case, I do not understand why you should call him 'Harry,' and me 'Mr. McCook.' May I ask how I have offended you?"

"I do not call him Harry when I speak to him."

"Only when you are arguing his cause?"

Margaret's impatience could stand no more.

"What are you aiming at, Mr. McCook? I am not used to having questions put to me that seem to have a double meaning. I should hardly presume to call you by your first name when you are so much older than I. I should not think you would desire it. Is there anything peculiar in that?"

"Yes, for if Harry were my age, and I his, I still think you would call him Harry."

"I am sure I should if I wanted to. Why do you make so much of a little thing?"

"Because it is not a little thing to me."

Margaret dropped her look of candor. She shielded herself behind a screen of feigned stupidity, after the manner of her kind.

"You are still mysterious," she said, smiling. "I wish Harry would hasten back with that ottoman. If he does not hurry, the flower will be quite open before I have a chance to look into it, and I want to see the leaves when they first start to move."

"I shall come to see you to-morrow, Miss Barthwait."

"It is a thousand pities, Mr. McCook, but I fear I shall not be at home."

"The day after to-morrow, then."

"As you please."

"At what hour?"

"How should I know? Papa and I go out riding every day. I cannot tell what hour he may come for me. You will have to take your chances."

"Would Harry have to take his chances if he came?"

"Sir?"

"Are you going to marry Harry Leiter? Have you promised to be his wife?"

"Sir, you are asking too much, even for an old friend. Pray excuse me, Mr. McCook."

She ran out of the conservatory into the parlor. Harry was not there. Neither was he in the music room. She searched the library with like success. Then she called softly:

"Harry! Harry!"

There was an answer equally subdued from the smoking room. She went in. Harry was sitting with his feet on the table, smoking furiously. Margaret entered with cheeks as red as fire.

"I've come for that ottoman," she said.

Harry leaped to his feet.

"What an angel!" he cried. "Come in the other room out of this chaos of smoke."

"Not just yet. I do not want to go till I have made you ask something."

"Ask something? I'll ask anything. I am sure there are a great many things you could tell me. What do you want me to ask?"

"I thought there might be something you would like to know."

"Why, yes, I would like to know just how truly a certain lady with midnight eyes loves me. I have been mad with curiosity to know for months. I have tried to find out by dreaming of her. But my dreams told nothing. I have sat by the hour feverishly wondering if the time would ever come when I dare look into her eyes as I do now—as she gave me the right to do by what she said in the conservatory this evening. But if I knew just how much this lady loved me, I do not think there is another thing in the whole universe that I would be curious about. I cannot conceive that cosmos can hold any other fact worth mentioning. What, then, shall I ask about?"

"But then you cannot know whether or not this lady will love you always."

The cheeks were reddkr yet, the eyes were swimming, the hands trembling and raised to the lips to hide the quiver of those perfumed things.

"This lady may be sought by others, although she

is but a worthless thing. Would you not like to know if she will be—will belong—"

"If she will belong to me? Well, I should say she would! I should be pleased to have any one question it."

"But she has not the right to say that you have asked her to be—Oh, Harry! Mr. McCook has been talking to me. He is coming to see me."

"Margaret! You wish me to ask you now before you see him, to be my wife? Love, be my wife. Give me your spirit now, for eternal keeping. I can never thank you enough for your confidence. I shall remember to my dying day that you came to me for refuge. I shall give you a ring of betrothal now, and from now till death you are mine."

He drew a ring from his finger and slipped it on Margaret's. She held him at a distance and looked at him with a pure radiance in her eyes. They stood for a moment gazing at each other with awe. What a miracle life was! What a stupendous creation was the soul! Why had they never observed how marvelous man and woman were? Suddenly Harry threw his hand over his eyes, as if blinded by the glory of that revelation. When he found the courage to look up again, Margaret was gone.

As Margaret ran back into the conservatory, her dress caught upon the prongs of a small garden rake that had been left near the door. The judge was talking animatedly, but he saw her accident and loosened the dress, setting the rake back in the place where it had stood.

"The boy was born with a thirst for blood," he was saying. "I realized that from the first. His chief delight when he was an infant was to catch worms and torture them. As he grew older it was impossible to leave him alone with the other children. His sister had a dozen marks on her where she had been cut by him at different times. I could not find that he was especially vicious in any other way. I could not even say that his face was evil. Indeed, had I seen him before I knew anything about his life, I should have said that he had a very strong face. There was certainly no look of imbecility in it, and so far as I was able to judge, no look of insanity either. But in his short life of twelve years that boy had killed four of his playmates. He had not been content with killing them outright, but he had tortured and mangled them horribly. I cannot say that I thought him exactly insane. I believed that he would have been able to have resisted this temptation to kill had he desired. And yet, it was evident that he could not be treated like a common murderer. If I had sent him to a reform school, his presence would have endangered the life of every child in the institution. There was no doubt that the best thing for every one would have been to execute him. But he was too young to execute. I had to have him put in solitude in the penitentiary. But I felt then, as I often have, that there should have been an institution between the penitentiary and the insane asylum where he could be put. I never visit

a poor house and see the vicious imbeciles there that the need for such an institution is not impressed upon me."

"Such a creature would seem to be the habitation of devils. You remember how the possessed persons used to tear and cut themselves in the days of Christ?" remarked Mrs. McCook, who was still petting the rabbit. "I cannot believe there is anything normal about a person who would commit such crimes."

"Well," cried Margaret, "of all subjects, I must say you have struck the most lugubrious. Why, I should like to know, should we talk about imbeciles and maniacs?"

"Why, indeed," drawled McCook, "we surely are above the danger of misfortune."

"Mr. McCook," said Margaret with ill-concealed anger, "has an insinuating tone when he speaks this evening that makes it seem as if we might be capable of anything—even murder."

Harry sauntered in just then wearing a peculiarly self-conscious expression, that was evidently meant for nonchalance.

"So we might," said McCook replying to Margaret's indignant remark.

Mrs. McCook shook the rabbit out of her lap and rose to go. She and Margaret went up the stairs together with their arms around each other's waists, talking softly after the manner of women. When they descended, all of the gentlemen were in the hall except the judge, who reappeared in a few mo-

ments. As he walked down the long parlors, Margaret watched him with the proud reflection that she had never seen him look so young, so alert, so noble and dignified as now. "Even Harry," she said to herself, "will hardly look so well at that age."

Unfortunately there was no opportunity to give Harry even a glance of parting that all the others could not partake in, so she preferred not to look at him at all, thinking it better to leave him with the memory of that long, holy glance, which sealed their troth.

"Uncle," said Harry, when the doors were closed on the guests, "McCook is not the fellow he used to be. I don't know of any one who can make himself more pestiferous than he can. I hope he is never asked to set his foot in this house again!"

The butler, aroused from his nap in the adjoining cloak room, came in to lock up. He bore the historic name of Guy Mannering—or at least, Harry insisted that he did. There were no family secrets that he did not share, and he stopped now in astonishment at hearing the gentle old man say severely:

"I do not cast off the children of old friends for a caprice on your part, lad. William McCook is a splendid fellow, as he ought to be, considering his father and mother. You can hardly expect me to close my doors on a man simply because he has some personal peculiarities that you don't like."

"I tell you, uncle," responded Harry, "I feel,

though I cannot prove it, that he is a treacherous cad. He is disloyal. Margaret as much as told me so. I certainly will not have Margaret meet him here again." The dictatorial tone of the young man touched the pride of his uncle. He straightened himself and fixed an angry eye on his boy.

"Harry, my lad," said he in a voice trembling with nervous excitement. "I have run my own house for twice as many years as you have lived. I can do it still, without any suggestions. William McCook will come here often, I hope, and I trust he and Miss Margaret will spend many evenings here together under my roof, where until now no guest has ever been slandered." Harry had a temper that flashed up at each excuse. The experiences of the evening had made him doubly sensitive, and his emotions lay near the surface.

"Then, sir," he said, rising and striding about the room, "I imagine it will come to a question of choosing between your beloved William McCook and myself. If he comes here I do not."

"You're a fool, sir," returned the old man indignantly. "But you need not think you can dictate to me. Get to your room and go to sleep. But before you go there have the kindness to recollect that I shall pass a sleepless night, to pay for the state you have got me in."

Harry walked out of the room with his head up and left the old man sitting with his treasured violins.

Guy Mannering saw to the fastening of the front door, and he, too, went up the stairs, turning once to look back at his old master. His anger had been the feeble anger of age, and now two great tears were slowly coursing down his cheeks, as he stared into the dying fire. His long white locks looked more reverend than ever before to the sympathetic serving man. His blue-veined hands, resting on his cane, were feeble and thin.

"I would like to pick him up and carry him to bed," said Guy Mannering to himself; but he feared to hurt the old man's feelings by seeming to see his feebleness and grief, so he climbed the second flight of stairs to his own room.

"I can't quite remember," was his last thought as he turned his face to the wall and dropped off to slumber, "whether I fastened that east window in the music room or not. That darn fool, Harry, turned my head."

Guy Mannering was the first to enter the conservatory the next morning. It was his part to arrange the flowers for the breakfast table. The scent of the flower that had blossomed the night before was almost sickening, but it was not that that made Mannering lean against the side of the door and turn deadly pale. Neither was it that that made him run for the kitchen and return with the cook and the coachman and the laundress. There are few flowers, however deadly, that would make four sturdy working people all turn white and sick at once. What they saw was the remains of the lit-

tle pink-eyed rabbit. Its remains were literally strewn "over the floor. A lynx would not have more savagely demolished it. But it had not been torn by the relentless teeth of a lynx. The instrument that had mangled it was the little garden rake. These iron teeth had piecred its tender breast; they had pulled out its brains; they had ripped up its spotless fur.

"Luna," gasped Guy Mannering to the cook, "you will be keeling over if you stay here. Go to the music room and tell Mr. Leiter. He is down by this time."

A moment later a cry froze the blood of the already trembling servants. It was hardly a cry—it was a howl, that increased each moment. Guy Mannering, more courageous than his fellows, made his way to the room from which it proceeded. The first thing that met his eyes was Luna sitting upon the floor and giving voice to that crescendo of terror. Her lids fluttered up and down with an automatic movement. Mannering followed the direction of those ghastly orbs. Then he reeled and fell heavily to the floor.

In his leather chair, before the ashes of his hospitable hearth, sat the master of the house—murdered. His throat had been cut, and across his cheeks were bloody gashes such as a Sioux simulates when he paints for war. They gave a sort of frightful grotesqueness to the face. The long, delicate hands were striped up the back with knife cuts resembling the markings of a glove.

A half hour later the servants, moaning, and trembling, went together to waken Harry, who was always a late sleeper. As they neared the door they saw that it stood open, and when they looked in the room they saw that it was empty and that the bed had not been slept in.

CHAPTER III.

When Harry left his uncle the night before, he went immediately to his room. Fifteen minutes of solitude there made him miserably ashamed of his foolish anger. In half an hour he made up his mind that his first act in the morning would be to apologize. At the end of an hour, he determined to make his peace that night. Still he hesitated, from a sort of boyish shame. When he came to think the matter over, it seemed as if a good part of his life had been spent making mistakes and apologizing for them. That he should have been guilty of such inexcusable ebullition on the very night made sacred with Margaret's promise, was particularly humiliating.

His face turned hot with mortification as he paced the room thinking it over. What a regenerating, holy thing her love had seemed to him, with her beautiful appeal to him for protection. What modesty and what innocence was hers. A coarser girl would never have been capable of such frankness—conventionality and not womanhood would have spoken. Tears filled the young man's eyes as with a flood of glorified recollection, her tenderness, her freshness, her peacefulness all came back to him. Then there came to him by a sudden transition of memory a day that he had spent as a boy in a summer meadow. That day had been a reve-

lation to him. In it he had discovered that nature was beautiful. Until then, the full eloquence of the wind, the beneficence of the sky, the miracle of running water, of growing grass, of the eternal fruition and harmony had never reached his soul. Never since that wonderful day had he known such an hour of illumination as that which Margaret had given him. And mark the difference! That other day had ended in prayer. This one had ended in an exhibition of selfishness and arrogance and toward the kind old soul who loved him better than life. He was a heedless, egotistic fool!

Having arrived at this conclusion, he hurried out of the room and down the stairs, thinking that he might find his uncle still in the music room. But all the lights were out, and it was evident that he had retired. So it was really best to leave all till morning.

Sleep was, however, far from Harry's eyes. His cheeks still burned fiercely and his blood was hot and restless. He decided to see what the night air could do toward soothing it, and groping his way to the rack he found his coat and hat, and let himself softly out of the front door.

The night was heavy and dull, with a moist wind blowing from the east. The massive clouds seemed to almost touch the tops of the loftier buildings. Harry walked on unconscious of whither he was going, until he found himself in front of the Barthwait mansion. He laughed aloud softly at the instinct that had brought him there, and, leaning

against a lamp-post, he stared at Margaret's window.

Harry was not used to being sentimental. His sense of the humorous was stronger than his romanticism, and he could not all at once resign himself to the sweet follies of love. No matter how holy the passion, he must still have seen its ludicrous side, and he could not help being amused at himself for shivering there in the damp winter air. But, however he might jeer at himself, there was no denying that he was a lover of quite the old-fashioned type, and that his heart was beating much faster than it ordinarily did, because he was standing in front of the house that held Margaret.

While he stood there dreaming, he saw a marvelous thing. A man came running rapidly from the back of the house, and without pausing, began to clamber up the balcony that led to Margaret's room. This room was upon the side of the house, but it had a large, square window that made it perfectly visible from the front. This window was supported by a portecochere, which extended out further into the yard than did the window and a part of the roof of this was utilized as a balcony. A sort of artistic lattice work that walled in one side of the porte-cochere made it as easy to climb as if it had been a ladder. Harry, with his heart in his mouth, rushed forward to keep this fox away from the fold of his lamb. His impression was that it was a burglar who had been reckoning upon the chances of success at that particular portion of the

house, and was acting rapidly to lessen the chances of detection. And yet was it not likely that a man bent on such a mission would have examined the vicinity to make sure that he was not observed?

Harry was standing under the street lamp where he could be plainly seen by anyone who looked his way. But this man did not look to right or left. For the life of him Harry could not help thinking that he climbed that lattice as if he had accomplished the feat before. He was unarmed, or he would certainly have fired at him. He could not tell what it was that kept him from calling out. But there seemed to be something familiar in the figure. That peculiar familiarity filled him with a sort of unreasonable terror. He had a feeling that if the man turned his face toward him, he should see the countenance of a friend. But by the time the man had reached the top of the structure and swung himself over the railing—and it took him but the briefest time to do it—Harry had found his wits sufficiently to know that he must stop him from getting into that room. But at the minute that he would have called out, he was stopped. What he heard literally froze his blood:

"Now, my pretty Margart," said the man to himself, as he busied himself with the window, "I am here."

The window yielded. He went in. In another moment a soft light gleamed from behind the curtains. After a little it was extinguished, but the man did not come out. Harry listened, and thought he heard vioces, but he could not be sure.

The next few hours seemed like a delirium. He appeared to be walking forever, forbidden to rest, and all about him were clouds of rolling flame and sulphurous smoke. In short, for a time there was nothing but madness. His reason could not credit what he had seen—and yet, beyond all peradventure, he had seen it. When at length these clouds had rolled away, he found himself on the open prairie. In the east the sky was splendid with shimmering billows of rose. At the dawn of creation, the sky could not have been more tender. It turned the far-stretching plain into an opalescent sea, for as the snow reflected the glow from its hard, and polished surface, lights of amber and purple raced over the whiteness like shadows over a summer field. Harry stood like one entranced, looking at this transformation. As he looked he sank slowly to the ground and let himself be bathed in glory.

Two hours later, a farmer, driving into town, saw a man asleep on the snow, his face drenched with tears. He awakened him and induced him to take a seat beside him on his wagon. An hour's drive brought them once more to the heart of the city. Harry, who had not spoken, signified that he would like to go. The farmer stopped. Harry felt in his pocket for his purse. But he was without it, and still wore the dinner dress that he had so carefully attired hmiself in the night before. He tapped all of his pockets to make sure that there was nothing with which to reward the man, and his hand struck a fob—a fine intaglio—that dangled from his watch

ribbon. He unclasped it from his watch and tossed it to the man. Then he started to cross the street, but he staggered and almost fell. A policeman caught him by the arm and drew him to the walk.

"You'd better call a cab, young man," said the official. "What's the matter with you?"

"I've been horribly sick," gasped Harry thickly. "Isn't that the bath house there? I'll get in there awhile."

The policeman helped him down the steps, and the proprietor, recognizing an old customer, poured a cup of coffee down him and locked him in a room. There he slept like one dead till afternoon.

CHAPTER IV.

The assignment book of the Morning *Chronicle* on that afternoon, contained the following laconic direction:

"Leiter murder—Pond."

The young man for whose eye this was intended, glanced at it with some interest, consulted the directory, buttoned his coat around him and walked in a business-like way to the corner of State street where he took a Cottage Grove avenue car.

When Dennis Pond reached the Leiter mansion he found that he was only ten minutes behind the coroner and his assistant. These gentlemen were listening to the tale of poor Guy Mannering, as he poured it out between his hysteric sobs.

Pond, having established his right to enter, walked into the room and regarded the ghastly figure in the chair. It was evident that the warlike marks on the face and hands were made after the throat of the old man had been cut. Had it been otherwise, he would have been able to make some resistance. That he had made no resistance was proved by the fact that his poor, mutilated hands still grasped the cane as Guy Mannering had seen them when he turned to look back at his master the night before. Everything in the room was in place, there was not even a displacement of the rug before the fire, on which the feet of the murdered man still rested.

Pond made a note in a little blank book he carried. It was thus:

"He had no reason to fear harm from the hand of the person who murdered him. The attack was a surprise. Since he evidently did not even attempt to arise from his chair it must have been made by some one he had no cause to fear."

"Who sleeps in the house beside yourself?" he inquired of the pallid butler.

"Luna, sir; the cook, sir; and Nora, the housemaid, sir; and Jim McCarthy, the coachman, sir; and Mr. Harry."

"Who is Mr. Harry?"

"Mr. Harry Leiter, sir; the nephew of—of him."

"Where is he now?"

"I don't know, sir; he has not come home yet."

"Did he go out after the murder was discovered?"

"No, sir; we could not find him this morning."

"Did he sleep here last night?"

"Well, sir, we found his bed undisturbed this morning. He sometimes sits up to write at night."

"Has he ever been missing before in the morning?"

"No, sir; I think not."

"Is it his habit to sleep away from home without telling of his intention?"

"I can't say that I ever remember of it before, sir."

"Did you suppose that he had gone to his room last night?"

"I saw him go upstairs, sir. I thought he had gone to his room."

"About what time was that?"

"After midnight, sir. We had a dinner party last evening, and the guests did not leave till almost midnight."

"Who was at the party?"

"Judge Barthwait, sir, and his daughter; Mr. McCook, the states attorney, and his mother; and Mr. Harry and his uncle, of course."

"What did Harry Leiter do after the company left?"

"He stayed and talked with his uncle awhile."

"Do you know what they talked about?"

"Well, they talked some about Mr. McCook."

"What did they say?"

"I had rather not tell, sir. It weren't much."

"You will have to tell in court and at the inquest. You might as well tell now."

Pond had no heart to be harsh with the faithful serving man; for the wretched old soul stood trembling with terror at the sight before him, and at a vague alarm that seemed to have just come to him.

"Mr. Harry said he didn't think much of McCook, sir, and that he hoped he would never be invited to the house again."

"And what did Mr. Leiter say?"

"He said, sir, that he would invite whom he chose."

"And then?"

"That was pretty much all, sir."

"Now, see here, my friend, what did Mr. Leiter reply—young Mr. Leiter, reply to that?"

"Well, then, sir, he said—he's kind of quick an' don't always mean what he says—been like that from a baby—he said then his uncle would have to choose between him and Mr. McCook. That's just his way, sir; but he don't mean nothing."

"How did the old man take that?"

"He seemed terribly cut up, sir. He told him he was a fool and that he had better go to bed."

"And then did he go?"

"He went up-stairs."

"Did you go soon after?"

"Yes, sir. Mr. Leiter was still sitting there in the chair. The tears was rollin' down his cheeks, sir. He was easy cut up—bein' so old."

"But the young man went to bed angry?"

"Yes, he did, sir, but his anger ain't very deep nor lastin.'"

He could say no more, but broke into audible sobbing, seeing as he did, with terrible clearness, the drift of the questions. Pond turned away his head out of consideration for the poor old soul. As he glanced out of the window, a sudden thought came to him. He followed the idea by feeling of the window fastenings. They were every one fast. He suggested to the assistant coroner that they try all of the windows in the house. Every one was found tightly fastened.

"The murder must have been committed by some one in the house," said the coroner's assistant, who was young and who had read Gaboriau's novels.

"Yes," said Pond, "or by some one who got in

through the door, or who entered by the window and closed the latch after they—he, she, or it—were in."

"Not likely," said the assistant with a professional emphasis.

"No?" said Pond deferentially.

In the course of a half-hour Pond caught Mannering alone.

"See here, my friend," he said to him softly, holding him by the coat so that he could not get away, "what in the world is that bloody thing in the conservatory?"

"That, sir, is Mr. Harry's little pet rabbit. We found it all chewed up like that this mornin' when we came down, an' it was when we run to tell Mr. Leiter about it that we found him, sir. Oh, don't ask me no more, sir. I wish I was dead, sir! I wish I was! Why in God's name, sir, don't Mr. Harry come home?"

"It looks bad for him, don't it?" asked Pond, with an affectation of candor.

"Not to one that knows him, sir. It is some accident that has kep' him out. He would never stay mad this long. I know him, sir."

"My friend, I want to know who killed the rabbit?"

"Then you will know more than I do, sir. I ain't no idea. A prettier or more harmless cretur never was. There wan't no sense in killin' it."

"My friend, you have a great head. Neither was

there any sense in killing that white-haired old man. Don't you see the drift?"

"No, sir; I don't see nothin' this mornin.' I feel as if the end of the world was comin.'"

"Not because of this evil, my friend. If sights like these would end the world, it would have been over long ago. Both of these acts were insane. I think they were both done by the same person. The question now is, were they done by the same instrument?"

"I can tell you that, sir. The little bunny was killed with the garden rake. You can't cut a man's throat with a garden rake."

"Suppose you show me that garden rake, friend."

The old servant showed it to him willingly but wearily. Pond examined it with care and then said:

"Don't you think you had better clear up this muss, my friend?"

Mannering obeyed without a word. He brought out a small hose and began to flood the blood-stained floor, carrying the rabbit meanwhile out to the stable. Pond himself washed off the rake and set it back out of sight.

"If every one gets hold of this," said Pond to himself, "it will be spoiled. I'll spring this on the dear public myself."

Then he went out and stood on the corner for an hour.

At the end of that time he saw a young man walking moodily down the street.

"I think," said Pond gently, "I have met you at the Calumet Club, sir."

"Ah, good morning, sir," replied Leiter absently, "glad to see you."

"Are you going home?" said Pond.

"Yes, why?"

"Heard the news this morning?"

"What news?"

"About your uncle."

"No! What is it? Is—what is it?"

"He is murdered, Mr. Leiter. He—"

But the young man had leaped away from him without a word and was bounding up the steps in mad haste, every muscle tightened, every nerve strung tight, his face contorted.

"Innocent!" cried Pond to himself, "innocent, by Jove!"

He started to follow him. Then suddenly he stopped and picked up something that stuck up from a dirty snow drift beside the walk. It was a large pocket knife, open, and notwithstanding the fact that it had lain in the snow it was blood-stained. It had a horn handle, in which a tiny bar of silver was imbedded, and on this bar was written:

"Harry B. Leiter."

"Well," said Pond, taking out his handkerchief and wiping his forehead slowly, "now what will I do?"

He was given no choice. At that moment, one of the city detectives came down the steps of the house.

"What did you pick up then, Pond?" said he.

Pond held the knife out on his hand. The man took it and examined it with a quiet face.

"Come in," he said. Pond followed him into the house. The ghastly body had been removed from the music room, and here by the desolate hearth sat the very few people who had met around it under such different circumstances the evening before. Margaret and Mrs. McCook sat side by side, holding each other's hands. Judge Barthwait stood talking in a low tone with the coroner. McCook leaned against the mantel as he had the night before, but with a pale and horrified countenance. One or two neighbors were present, and the coroner was but awaiting Harry's return from the room above, to begin the formal inquest. Besides these, was the hastily impaneled jury of six.

A few moments later Guy Mannering entered, leading Harry by the hand. His eyes still bore the horror that had fixed them when he looked on the frightful face of the dead. He did not tremble, but seemed to be frozen into a sort of painful rigidity.

The inquest began with the re-examining of Mannering, who, for the first time in years was put to the mental strain of remembering his own name, which was not Mannering at all.

"How do you come by an alias?" asked the coroner sternly.

"Don't know, sir. When I come yere my name

was John Watson. Mr. Harry named me Guy Mannering, sir. I've been Guy Mannering for many years. "

"Why," said the coroner, turning to Harry, "did you find it necessary to give this man an alias?"

Harry turned his dull gaze slowly on the coroner, and held it there waveringly.

"I do not understand," he said thickly.

"This man has two names," repeated the coroner, with dignified emphasis. "Why?"

"Oh!" exclaimed Harry, a light breaking in on him, "you mean Guy Mannering. We've called him that for these ten years."

"I should like to know the reason for so doing," said the coroner, acting upon the belief that he had discovered something that must be sifted to the bottom.

"What did we do it for?" asked Harry impatiently, yet with a gleam of humor breaking through his pain. "We did it, sir, for—for greens."

"Sir?" cried the horrified official.

"That is the solemn truth, sir. What do you suppose we would give him that fantastic name for? I named him that when I read the novel."

"Make a note of that," whispered the coroner to his assistant. The assistant gravely did so. "May this not be a clew?" he thought to himself. "From this we may discover that the young man has been insane for years. One does not read Gaboriau's novels for nothing.

The coroner resumed his examination of the old

man, eliciting much the same replies as those that Pond had listened to before.

The other servants were examined, but they had retired early, and could throw no light on the matter.

The judge was examined next. He told of the pleasant evening that had been spent by the party, and volunteered the information that Harry and his uncle were on the best of terms.

"That's a very curious thing for a judge to do," said Pond to himself.

Harry also lifted his head at this gratuitous information, and stared at his old friend, but he made no remark. The lines about the eyes of the states attorney tightened. But his expression was inscrutable, and not even Margaret could guess what he was thinking. The judge deposed that immediately upon leaving the house he and his daughter had gone home and that he had retired. He slept till late, and did not learn of the crime until 10 in the morning. At first he was too prostrated to visit the house, but was just preparing to do so when the summons called him to the inquest. The coroner turned his attention to McCook, and while they were talking Pond managed to get close to the judge.

"I beg pardon," he whispered, "but I think you said that all the guests departed about midnight?"

"I did," replied the judge, turning toward him courteously.

"You went immediately to bed, Judge Barthwait, and stayed there till morning?"

"Of course, sir. May I ask what paper you represent?"

"The morning *Chronicle*, Judge. Does any other man beside yourself have the key to the front door?"

"It is not likely, sir, since I am the only man in the house. I think we had better discontinue talking. We are making a disturbance."

"He turned away with a gesture of apology, to listen to what Harry had to say.

"Where were you last night at 12 o'clock?" inquired the coroner.

"Here, with my uncle."

"The dead man?"

"Yes."

"What were you talking about?"

"Personal matters."

"I must ask you to repeat that conversation to me, sir."

"I cannot do so here, sir. I will do it in private."

"Why not here?"

"Because it relates to a matter that cannot with courtesy be repeated."

"Nevertheless, I must ask you to do it, sir."

"I requested my uncle not to invite a certain gentleman here again. He said that he reserved the right to choose his own guests. I told him that if that man visited the house I should not. He told me to go to my room. I did so, but I did not go to bed."

McCook was half smiling now. Margaret saw it and clenched her hands.

"I was heartily ashamed of myself by the time I reached my room, and I started a dozen times to return and apologize for my language."

"But you did not return?"

"Over an hour passed before I did so. I thought I might find my uncle still in the music room, but as I groped my way downstairs, I saw that all the lights were extinguished and imagined that he had retired."

"And then what did you do?"

"I knew I could not sleep, and I put on my coat and hat, which were hanging in the hall, and went out on the street."

"Did you light the gas or make any light for the purpose of finding your coat and hat?"

"I did not. I knew just where to find them."

"Did you enter the room where Mr. Leiter had been sitting?"

"The music room? No, I did not."

Margaret would hardly have realized the importance of these questions if she had not looked at her father's face. She saw that he was deeply fearful of the outcome. The veins stood out on his forehead, his hands were clasped, and tears of sympathy filled his eyes.

"Do they suspect—" she started to whisper, creeping close to her father, but she was stopped by his hand upon her mouth. She drew it away and held it in her own.

"After you got in the street last night, where did you go?"

Margaret felt before the answer came that it was going to be something fatal. She seemed to suddenly become conscious of a terror in Harry's soul. She could feel his misery. It was as if a curtain had been drawn aside, revealing him to her completely. But it was only misery that she saw. All that caused it was impossible for her to know.

"It is impossible for me to tell you where I was last night," said Harry slowly.

Every one in the room looked at him in amazement.

"Mr. Leiter, do you fully realize all that such a denial will mean?"

"It might mean everything or nothing. I cannot tell where I was last night."

"Do you mean that you will not tell or that you do not know?"

"I cannot tell you where I was from one till two o'clock, and I do not know where I was afterward."

The veins stood out on the judge's forehead.

"What reckless answers," he whispered to Margaret. "Has the boy taken leave of his senses?"

"Do you recognize this knife?" asked the coroner.

"I do," said Harry, shuddering as he saw the blood on it. "It is mine."

"When did you have it last?"

"In the afternoon, before I changed my clothes."

"Before you changed your clothes for the suit you now wear?"

"Yes."

"Where did you have the knife?"

"In this room. I was fixing a violin bridge for my uncle."

"That will do," said the coroner; "the jury may retire."

As the men left the room Margaret left her father's side and rushed impulsively toward Harry. He saw her coming, put up his hands and shut his eyes and cried insanely:

"Keep her off! Keep her off!"

"Innocent?" said Pond to himself, "well, I'm not so sure after all."

As for Margaret, she merely thought the poor boy had gone insane with his troubles, and like a sensible woman left him to the care of the family doctor, who was present. This kind old man sat beside the young man and divided his time between consoling whisperings and the mixing of sedatives. Margaret looked on with a white and anxious face, but said nothing more, and made no attempt to win a glance from the man who had promised to love her always only the night before.

In a few moments the verdict of the jury was known. Harry was held to the grand jury suspected of the murder of his uncle. No one spoke. The judge dropped his arms on the table and buried his head within them. Margaret's head drooped lower and lower until it fell on the arm of the chair. Mrs. McCook motioned to her son and he picked the girl up in his arms and carried her from the room, while his mother followed. As they went

out Harry looked after them with a sort of hardened smile. For a time all that was evil in him came uppermost. A few moments later the house was left to the servants.

"Well," said Pond, as he rode back to the office, "the times are out of joint!"

CHAPTER V.

The next morning dawned pale and cold. Its lurid light breaking in through Margaret's undrawn curtains, aroused her from her broken sleep. She sat up in bed, pushed the tangled masses of hair back from her eyes, and looked out drearily. Never before since her mother died, had she awakened to an utter sense of misery and pain, and even that sorrow had been less poignant than this. That bereavement had in it something holy, beautiful, chastenting. This was scarlet with crime; it was made up of violence, shame, terror and injustice. The former sorrow had in it a touch of heaven. This seemed the work of hell.

"If I keep still and wait, I shall eat my heart out," said she aloud. "I do not propose eating my heart out, therefore I will neither keep still nor wait."

She got up, drew the curtains, to shut out that ghastly daybreak, lit the gas, took her morning bath with the accustomed vigor, and dressed herself neatly in a dark walking dress. When she reached the dining room she found her father had not yet descended, but she ordered her own breakfast to be brought in, and, for a girl with a breaking heart, ate remarkably well. The solution was that she felt like fighting. Miserable she might be; despairing, she was not. And when one feels like

fighting, one eats. She sent out for all of the morning papers, and read every line in them pertaining to the murder.

But though she so triumphantly established his innocence in her heart, she had a grievance against him nevertheless. It is no easy thing for a beautiful woman to forgive a man for begging, even in the time of crushing trouble, to be protected from her when she advances with outstretched arms. Margaret's face turned hot as she remembered it. At the time her pity for him was too great for any feeling of personal chagrin to find room in her heart. But now the significant slight was borne in on her with sharpness. At such a time, would not one have supposed that he would have turned to her for all comforting offices? As she turned it over again and again in her mind she ratified the opinion she had first arrived at. The secret of that night must have been one that made him shrink from her. Margaret said to herself that she forgave him. She would go to him as soon as her father would go with her; probably they would go in the afternoon; and then Harry would learn what her fealty was worth, and she would assure him that she would neither rest night nor day till he was cleared.

"I will reason out the murder some other time," said she, with not a little confidence, or assumed confidence, in her powers; and she called for her bonnet and cloak and went out. Now all this brave front had a good deal of shame in it after all. As

she stepped out on the street she made a point of holding her head steady and high, so that if any were looking they should see she was fearless. A girl more conventional might have thought it her place to stay immured in solitude, to refuse to see any one and to spend her time in useless regrets. But this independent American girl thought of doing nothing of the sort. She walked out this dull morning in the midst of madness, murder and mystery, with her proud little head well up; as full of courage as any of her compatriots, who laid down their lives for their country in times of trial. As she walked along absorbed in thought, her eye casually met that of a passerby. For a second she thought that it belonged to a friend, and then she felt it did not, and was about to look away, when the man raised his hat. Margaret gave a non-committal bow in return.

"I saw you yesterday, Miss Barthwait," said the stranger.

"Yes?" Margaret cautiously responded.

"Yes, at the inquest. Will you take my card, Miss Barthwait? A reporter's impertinence is professional and you will perhaps pardon me for addressing you?"

"Certainly, sir."

"Will you mind if I walk a block or two with you? I dare say you are quite as much interested in this terrible affair as I."

"I dare say I am," Margaret said, with a sad little smile, "quiet as much interested as you."

"Are the Leiters old friends of yours?"

"Very old friends indeed."

They broke the ice this way and by degrees gained confidence enough in each other to talk about the details of murder. Margaret would have liked to confess her relations to Harry, for then she could have asked the young man several important questions. She was anxious to know how Harry's actions could be learned against his will; but this was a subject she could not bring herself to speak on. She was very much surprised at Dennis. He was not at all like a reporter, according to her ideas of that class. His mild, blue eyes had in them a most kindly light. His manners were gentle, his movements slow, his voice soft. He asked her a great many questions about the dispositions of the dead man, and of Harry, and questioned her concerning her impressions of Harry's possible guilt.

"The impressions of a friend sometimes count for a great deal in these matters," he said. "The law does not recognize their value, I know, but, if you will pardon me for saying so, the law is but a dull thing."

"I know very well," replied Margaret courteously, "that you men of the press often succeed in tracking a crime to its right source when the law fails."

"Your father would not like to hear you say so, Miss Barthwait. I have heard him inveigh bitterly against what he termed the interference of the press in the course of justice. 'This case is being tried by the court, not by the newspapers,' he will say

haughtily; but I assure you that many a criminal would escape if it were not for the newspapers."

"Then, if you are used to dealing with such matters," said Margaret, looking at him furtively, "perhaps you can tell me what you think about this affair. It seems motiveless to me."

"No crime is motiveless, Miss Barthwait."

"Do you think so? What could prompt a person to kill a pretty innocent parrot, for instance?

"What," asked Pond quickly, "who killed a parrot?"

Margaret told him the story of her pet.

"I am glad," said Pond to himself, "that I said nothing about the rabbit after all."

Then he plied her with what seemed to her the most extraordinary questions.

Margaret turned her steps toward home after a time, but still Pond kept by her. She began to wish he would go, fearing that if her father should see her with him, he might reprimand her. And, indeed, the young man's questions were becoming most personal and impertinent. He asked how long she had been at home from school, if she and her father lived alone, how she spent her days and what they did in the evening. All this was disguised slightly under the veil of general conversation.

"It must be something of a mental strain," said Pond lightly, "for a young person to live with any one so astute and profound as your father. I should think his very presence would offer a continual reproach to levity."

"Oh, you do not know him," cried Margaret. "He is a close student, it is true, but he only studies after I go to bed, and I assure you he is one of the most responsive companions in ordinary circumstances. He is very fond of story telling, and his stories are always humorous. Besides, he has the rare faculty of never repeating himself. Oliver Wendell Holmes says that one cannot use a good tool too often; but I do not think that applies to stories."

"If Judge Barthwait never repeats himself, I must believe—not to impeach his veracity—that he has a vivid imagination. "

"Why, of course. I hope you are not one of those dull persons who require that a story shall be true, Mr. Pond. You might as well refuse to buy a beautiful picture because you do not know where it is painted."

Margaret dropped her head sadly. Why would this man talk on vapidly, when he must see how heavy her heart was, and how hard it was for her to make fitting replies. But he was merciless, and still kept up a fire of small talk, and Margaret saw that he was determined to accompany her to her very door. And, indeed, he did it, and only lifted his hat in farewell when her feet stood on the first step of her home. She nodded to him and lifted her dress preparatory to running up the steps, when she was stopped by the frightened yelling of her grayhound, Nat. A second later, the great animal came bounding around the house in a frenzy of terror.

His hair literally stood on end, his eyes were starting out of his head, and when he saw his mistress he bounded to her side and then fell and lay there, breathing hard and trembling in every limb.

"Great heavens!" cried Margaret, "what can the matter be? My poor fellow! There, there, you are safe, Nat. Put your head in my lap. Mr. Pond, I wish—" but when she looked up, Pond was gone.

"Well," said Margaret indignantly, "he is a most extraordinary young man. I have been wanting to get rid of him all the morning, and now at the very moment I want him, he is gone."

He was not to be seen up or down the street, and Margaret waited till she had soothed the dog, and then went with the poor animal to his kennel. He hung back, crying pitieously, but she insisted on dragging him with her. The neat kennel stood near the stable door, where it could be easily seen from the rear rooms of the house, though not from the kitchen, from which it was screened by a low lattice. As Margaret reached the back yard, she saw Pond just leaving it. He had been examining the kennel.

"What did you find?" she called after him.

"The kennel seems to be all right. Some one must have scared the dog," Pond called back.

"Wait," cried Maragret authoritatively, "wait, Mr. Pond. There was something peculiar—else what makes you look so—strange? Mysteries little and big seem to encompass us these last few dreadful days. What was it, Mr. Pond?"

"I do not know," he said pityingly, "I cannot tell. You are tired and worn, Miss Barthwait. Do not let a little thing like that dwell in your memory. It is not worth while."

"I cannot help thinking that you saw something that you will not tell me. Such a dog as this is not easily frightened, I can assure you, and I know that the mere presence of a rough stranger would not alarm him. I cannot tell why it is, but everything seems to have grown strange and terrible these last few days. Nothing is as it used to be."

"Miss Barthwait," said Pond softly, "you have been associated with a dreadful experience, and it is not strange that familiar things take on a strange aspect. I can imagine how you feel. Before I leave you, I want to know if I may ask a favor of you?"

"I think you may; what is it?"

"If any trouble or perplexity or mystery surrounds you, will you not let me know about it? Please separate me from my business, and do not imagine that I have any selfish ends to gain in asking you this. This tragedy may bring strange things to light, and the end is not yet. If you should need a friend, will you not call on me? I will be very proud of your confidence."

"I take your offer as 'tis meant, Mr. Pond. If I need help I will let you know."

She held out her hand, and the clasp of his, sympathetic and strong, made the tears roll down her cheeks. She turned away, with a gesture of depre-

cation for her weakness, and ran into the house, Nat keeping close at her heels like a frightened child. Margaret found her father in the library, buried in a book.

"Papa," cried Margaret to him, "you cannot possibly imagine what a dreadful time I have been having with Nat. He acts as if he had gone insane. See here!"

The judge laid down his book and looked at the dog.

"What is it?" he said. "Come here, Nat, old fellow. Come here, sir!"

But the dog broke away with a cry of terror, and bounded up the sairs to Margaret's room, where she found him when she went to take off her wrappings. Margaret told him to lie down on the rug, and then hastened to her father, for there were matters of great importance to talk over.

The judge was reading again when Margaret entered the room, but she took his book out of his hand with her usual pretty tyranny and sat herself upon his knee.

"Well," she said, kissing his forehead lovingly, "at what time shall we go to see Harry?"

She was anixous to get him started upon the subject of the murder that she might tell him her theories about Harry's mysterious conduct.

"Go to see Harry!" exclaimed the judge, pushing her back and looking into her face sternly. "We shall not go to see Harry."

"Papa, what can you mean? He will think we have deserted him."

"My dear, are you going to be one of those nauseating creatures who make a hero of every criminal? Do you intend to join the ranks of those absurd women who decorate a murderer's cell with flowers?"

"Father!" cried Margaret, starting from his arms, "it cannot be possible that you are referring to Harry. You do not mean that you think him guilty?"

"My child, let me ask if it is possible that you have for one moment supposed him innocent? My judgment is much better than yours in such matters. I cannot permit you to make yourself ridiculous in this matter."

"You seem to utterly forget that I have promised to marry him, papa."

"Margaret, the only thing you can do is to forget it. It must be done, my daughter."

"Why, you cannot mean it, papa," her voice broke and the tears began to fall. She put up her hands to hide them and the drops trickled through her fingers and ran down them. The judge held out his arms to her, but she refused to see the gesture.

"I know best, daughter," he said again.

"Papa," cried she, "I did not think you could ever be so unjust. Or so blind! You who have known Harry all his life, and you who know so well how misleading circumstantial evidence is! I cannot understand it!"

"Margaret, we have never had a hard word in our lives. Shall we have any now over a worthless ingrate and a criminal? I must go down town. Stay in quietly to-day. It is not best that you should be seen out much just now. I am very anxious that your name should not be connected in any way with this terrible affair. Here, daughter, kiss me. You will be very glad some time, that I advised you as I have."

"It is evident," said Margaret to herself after he had gone, "that Harry will not fight for himself, and that papa will not fight for him. And if the grand jury decides against him, he will be tried before papa. Could anything be more terrible? This does not seem—it cannot all be true—it cannot have happened to me, who have always been so happy and fortunate."

She sat in the chair her father had left with her elbows on her knees, her face in her hands, for a long time.

"I must work alone," she cried at last, starting up. "I will confide in no one, and I will find out the truth. Henceforth I have no friends. I will trust no one," and as she walked out of the room a drawn and almost aged look came into her eyes, as for the first time all that she was to bear and suffer was borne in upon her by a fateful presage.

CHAPTER VI.

Walking the floor of her room she mused upon what she should do. Should she go to Harry alone? It was more than likely that they would not admit her. But there he would be, counting the hours and looking for her—anxious to ask her forgiveness for his unaccountable rudeness of the day before. How strange that her father should be cruel to her now of all times. He had never spoken a harsh word to her before in his life, and to choose this miserable time for it was doubly cruel. Though, of course, one could not say that he had been exactly harsh—yet it was certain that he would be if she disobeyed him and visited Harry. She knew that he could be frightfully stern when he liked, and she feared to risk his displeasure. When the lunch bell rang she went to the dining room, but the determination which had given her an appetite in the morning was dampened now, and, after sipping at a cup of tea absently, she went to the drawing room, and, seating herself at the piano, played furiously for an hour, not conscious of what she was playing, but only furnishing a noisy accompaniment to her thoughts.

In the midst of this she heard the musical whirr of the door bell. A moment later the servant brought in the card of William McCook. Margaret's distressed heart cried that he might have

come as a friend, although her instinct told her that this was not likely. But, womanlike, she determined to be diplomatic in all that affected Harry, and she therefore hastened to the little reception room with that look and manner of cordiality that women of self containment so easily assume. McCook rose with a look of well-bred sympathy on his face.

"This is an odd time in the afternoon to call, Miss Margaret. But my time is not my own."

"No," said Margaret with gentle satire, and immediately hiding her grief, as is the way with women of good training, "you belong to the commonwealth."

McCook darted a sharp glance at her. He was not prepared for this mood. Margaret motioned him to a seat, and continued:

"But I am very glad to see that you are sometimes able to escape from the cares of state."

McCook could not for the life of him decide whether this was friendly banter or a gauntlet flung straight.

"It hardly seems possible that so much has happened since we dined together the other evening," watching her, meanwhile, closely.

"Catastrophes always seem sudden," said Margaret, merely for the sake of replying, "yet who knows how long this terrible tragedy may have been hanging over the head of dear old uncle!"

"Do you think, then, that it may have been a deliberate murder?"

"I cannot think. I can imagine no motive for anything so revolting. You are much better able to guess at the cause than I. I have never studied crime and its causes."

"If you had, Miss Margaret, you would have learned that a man seldom commits a crime unless he expects to gain something by it. The first question to ask is, who has profited by Uncle Leiter's death? I thank heaven that it will remain for me to see that his murderer is brought to justice. I ask for no higher mission. I shall be the avenger of that dear old man's death, Miss Margaret."

Margaret smiled at him coldly.

She was thinking, "he cannot even look heroic when he tries."

"Miss Margaret, I have come here to-day to ask you to join me in this. Lend me your woman's wit to help me avenge our kind old friend."

"I will willingly help you avenge him and clear Harry," said Margaret slowly.

'That is not the compact. We will avenge him, no matter whom his murderer is."

"Well," said she, "I do not know that I object to your phraseology. For, whoever it is, it is not Harry."

The words goaded McCook so that he could no longer keep his seat. He got up and walked toward Margaret, and stood over her while he said in a tone more authoritative than suppliant:

"It is not alone in this that I want your help, Margaret. Dear little girl, I want your aid in

everything. I want you for my wife. You must marry me. I shall carry your promise away with me."

His assurance gathered as he went on. He stooped over the girl and with strong and willful gaze commanded her to return his look. In some dark and inexplainable way, he seemed to threaten her. Margaret felt it, and against her will she let him know by her blanched face that she did so.

"Heaven help me," she breathed tremblingly, "I cannot do that, Mr. McCook. I have no heart to give you."

"In whose keeping is it, then?" he asked in a low voice, but with such a fierce intensity that he seemed to Margaret to almost shriek the words. "You had a heart not long ago. I saw it looking out of your beautiful eyes. Where is it now? It should be mine, and it will be yet, Margaret."

"No," said she trembling still, but looking him bravely in the eye. "I cannot call it back. You are quite right. It is held in keeping. It will never be mine to give again."

"Then I know who has it. But does he want it? But yesterday I saw him drive you away as if he could not bear to look upon your pure face, or else as if he hated you. Which was it?"

"It was neither," cried Margaret, rising and tossing back her proud little head. "It was neither, sir."

"No? I beg your pardon, Miss Margaret. I did not mean to vex you. Pray sit down again; pray do. If it was neither, what was it?"

"How do I know?" said Margaret angrily, wondering if she were not going to burst into wild tears, and saying to herself that she would rather die than do it. "I cannot read the minds of you men. You do not take trouble the way we do. If you have any regard for me, Mr. McCook, you will not continue this conversation. It seems a strange time to me to—think about such things."

"The time of trouble is the time that one wishes to protect the woman he loves."

"You are taking a strange way of doing it," returned she, but softening the words even as she spoke them, it being utterly strange to her to speak harsh words, even when they were deserved.

"Better not reject that help, Miss Margaret. It is honestly offered; and you may yet have cause to be thankful for it."

"I thank you indeed for all kindnesses that you may offer. If you wish to do me a real kindness, it will be by aiding Harry."

"You seem to forget my official position, Miss Margaret. If the grand jury decides against your friend, it will be my business to present the cause of the state."

"Mr. McCook, you know as well as I that it lies in your power to give him a great deal of aid. But I do not think you are willing to give it. You offer me aid, and when I specify what I wish you to do, you will not. Why do we talk together longer? We shall only make one another angry."

"You cannot make me angry, Miss Margaret. I

like you none the less for being loyal to your friend. And yet I feel sure that you will change. I shall not lightly resign the love of the woman I love, be certain of that. I have loved her too long."

"Mr. McCook, why do you force me to say anything more to pain you and myself? I am under a terrible shadow. Unless Harry is cleared, I shall never come out from under it. Why do you speak to me of this matter? Do you not see that I have no right to listen to it?"

"Miss Margaret, you will soon have the right. Even if you were married to Mr. Leiter, the law would soon give you the right to listen to just such words."

"What do you mean?

"The chances are that he will soon be dead to you and all his friends. You know what I mean; I can see that by your face. Tell me, if I prove him guilty, and so quite unworthy of your love, will you not retract what you have said to me today?"

"Have you known me to so little purpose all these years, William McCook? I have nothing against you, or at least I had nothing until now, but it is not for me to care for you; it is not my destiny. And now that you have suggested this treacherous treatment of, your friend, I shall distrust and dislike you always—and I'm very sorry to have to say it, but you force me to be plain."

It began to dawn on McCook that the matter was

hopeless, but this did not lessen his determination to do his utmost. But it destroyed the last grain of tenderness in him, and he felt like an angry beast as he looked at that frail girl, saw how tempting and fair she was, and realized his helplessness. He found his hat and bowed himself out, white and cold.

"One thing you will do well to keep in mind, Miss Margaret, and that is that no one in this world is benefited by the death of Henry Leiter except his nephew. The fact is there for you to make much or little of. And its best you should know it and weigh it. I do not apologize for having spoken to you of that other matter. I had to speak. I see you do not want my help, but still if ever you need me, and you may do so yet, do not hesitate to come. Good afternoon."

"Oh, God in heaven!" cried Margaret as the door closed behind him, "what is going to become of me? How can hearts be made so hard?" and she climbed the stairs to where Nat lay, and throwing her arms around his neck, wept as if joy had taken its departure from earth.

CHAPTER VII.

"I have tickets for 'Julius Caesar' for this evening," said the judge that day at dinner, "but I suppose you will not care to go, Margaret?"

The two were alone in the quiet dining room. Now and then the solemn housekeeper stalked in and out like an undertaker at a funeral. She had a way of always seeming to preside over the demise of a dinner, and when she cleared away the remains it was with the manner of one who completed the last sad obsequies. If she possessed any talents beyond those of a domestic sort, they consisted of an aptitude to discover the mournful and an instinct for smelling out coming catastrophies. Now, as she heard the judge make this remark, she shook her head dolefully. This, and not her father's question, decided Margaret. She never could help entertaining a desire to shock Mrs. McKee.

"We may as well go," said she, feeling her heart lighten as her brooding misery gave way for a moment to the sense of irritation. "I shouldn't like to go in a box, of course, but if we go quietly, I see no harm in it."

"'Julius Caesar' isn't much of a diversion, it must be confessed," said the judge, "but I have a horror of the house this evening. I feel as if I must go somewhere."

"Dear old papa," murmured Margaret lovingly,

"we both feel as if the ground had suddenly vanished from beneath our feet. I am sure we have need to love and trust each other more than ever before. Let us have no secrets from each other, dear."

"Secrets," cried the judge peevishly, "pray, why should we have any secrets? Women—even the most sensible of them—say remarkably childish things at times."

"Well," said Margaret, pouting a little, and playing with her fork, "if you insist that I am not to think of poor Harry, then I have no choice but to have a secert from you. All I want is that you should let me be frank with you, dear."

"Margaret," returned the judge, flushing from some cause that Margaret could not discover, "I am sure your mother would never have spoken of affairs of the heart with the freedom that you do. I sometimes fear, daughter, that you have lost something of that deep—I cannot just tell how to put it —you have been, I would say, most unfortunate in being deprived of your mother's counsel s."

"I know that better than any one else can," returned the girl, with a scarlet face, "and I am sure if the occasion were an ordinary one, that I would be as reticent as you could possibly desire. Of course, if poor mamma were alive, I should go to her with these matters and be listened to with sympathy. I am certain she would never suspect me of immodesty. But as I have so long ago lost her, I have no one to come to but you, and you listen to me like—like a man. You forget that I have

always thought of you as most girls do their mothers."

Two tears rolled slowly down the soft cheeks and salted the soup.

"Well," cried the judge, "I am a villain. Come over here, sweetheart, and kiss your old father. You cannot wonder that I am tender of you, and shudder when I think of your name being associated with that of a man under suspicion."

Margaret had not the heart to break this comforting caress with another plea for Harry. She concluded to wait till a more auspicious time. As for going to the theatre, she saw nothing disloyal in that. All she wanted was to find a forgetfulness for an hour or two. So the carriage was called, and the judge, in irreproachable evening attire, helped Margaret down the steps to it at a quarter of eight.

"You are certainly the best dressed man of your age I ever saw," said Margaret proudly and half banteringly. "Now, when I get your age, I shall be dowdy. Dowdy is a purely feminine adjective, isn't it? How many disagreeable things are purely feminine!"

"Daughters, for instance," said the judge, with loving accent.

Margaret nestled close to him and he threw his arm around her. So, side by side, they rode to the end of their journey, neither speaking but both filled with comfort for the time in spite of the widening breach between them. Perhaps the consciousness of

this breach and all that must inevitably come from it caused them to draw closer together, as if to shield their love from harm. Margaret had never looked more beautiful. Her anxiety lent an almost dazzling brilliancy to her eyes; her cheeks were flushed to a deep crimson; her mouth tremulous; her carriage full of pride that was almost defiant. A peasant's cloak of black satin draped her from shoulder to shoe; a close fitting cap of velvet circled with plumes covered her dainty head, and in her hand she carried a prodigious fan of sable plumes, which she waved with a slow and stately motion that gave the young man in the row behind her the idea of the plumes on a hearse. Indeed, the young man behind her was filled with lugubrious thoughts. For the first time in his life he was suffering with a pain at the heart—the sort of pain that youth knows oftenest. That morning he had come upon life in that strange and awful way that it is appointed to all to do. He had, in short, seen a woman. Men may live among women for many years without seeing them; and when the knowledge of all that a woman is to man is conveyed to them there follows one of two things—unspeakable happiness or indescribable misery.

"I know I'm imaginative," said Dennis Pond to himself, watching the slow movement of those plumes and breathing in the perfume that blew from them, "but this is not imagination. If it were, I should not be so sure that it was hopeless."

He was in that sensitive state where all his per-

ceptions were sharpened. He knew that Margaret was watching the play listlessly, but that the judge was concentrating on it all that keen critical faculty that had made him famous. And, indeed, the production was well worth the attention. There was the high and melancholy Brutus moving on a plane above his fellows, and speaking through the mellowed and splendid tones of Edwin Booth; there was the classic Caesar of Lane, with its undertone of tenderness; there was the fiery Antony —not the Antony of Shakspeare, to be sure, but one that the public applauded; and there was the rasping and impulsive, yet calculating, Cassius of Barrett. The young man behind Margaret was conscious that it was on this man that the judge fixed his closest attention.

At length came the scene in the forum. Caesar, crowned and haughty, enters. The judge raised his glass and fixed it on the face of Cassius. There came the plea, the refusal, the awful immobility of the senators, the fated unsuspicion of Caesar; then the swift rush—the thrusts—the shuddering end. Margaret raised her hands to shut out the terrible scene; but the judge, with his eyes still fixed on Cassius, raised unconsciously from his seat, and stood there staring till Margaret touched him on the arm. As he felt her touch, he started, looked around with a blush and sat down, saying in a half-audible voice, which was meant to apologize for his absorption:

"Lawrence Barrett has done that as no other living man could do it."

There was a sound of "sh—sh" from his neighbors, and he relapsed into silence. Perhaps he was mortified at the exhibition of emotion he had been guilty of. At any rate he seemed restless and flushed and at the end of the act he said something to Margaret which the young man could not catch, and they left the theatre. As they did so, Margaret's eye fell on Pond and she bowed with a smile so sweet and yet so mournful, that the young man actually drooped his head to hide the tears that sprang to them. His heart beat so that it almost suffocated him, and he arose suddenly and rushed into the open air.

Margaret slept but little that night, and several times she thought she heard her father moving about his room, as if he, too, were restless and disturbed.

There were others who for similar reasons were wakeful that night.

Harry Leiter paced his cell many hundred times. A dull light shone in from the corridor and threw the line of the bars across his path. He stepped on these shadows with something of the same feeling that a man might have who trod on burning plowshares. Again and again he tried to review the evidence against him, and to make it plain to himself why he should be suspected of that crime, but try as hard as he might, he could not understand it all. Margaret filled his mind, and around her he saw

floating a nimbus of blood. His uncle's death and her horrible falsity were hopelessly commingled in his mind.

Harry could have sworn that he had been physically bruised. From head to foot his flesh was sore to the touch. Each sound that reached his ears caused an acute pain. Had any one suggested that his suffering was purely mental, he would have laughed at them and held out his aching arms to show them the bruises which he felt, but did not take the trouble to look for. Indignation toward Margaret he did not feel, neither did anger form a part of his grief for his lost friend—his murdered companion, whose kind old lips he had kissed every night of his life. His clearness of vision was departing, and a murky cloud of horror hung over him, through which he could see nothing. Night gave place to a gray morning, and found him still pacing the floor. The gas was put out; the light streamed in coldly and searchingly. Harry looked up at it with dull comprehension, and then threw himself on his cot and slept heavily.

The morning was half spent when he was aroused by a touch on the shoulder. He looked up and saw one of the guards standing over him.

"What is it?" asked Harry sullenly; "why could you not let me sleep?"

"A young lady has called, sir. You can see her, if you like."

"I want to see no one," said Harry angrily. "Who is it?"

"I'll find out, sir," said the man.

He was back again in a moment.

"Miss Barthwait is her name. I forgot to mention that, of course, I must be present when you see her."

"I will be excused to the lady," Harry returned more gently, suddenly remembering that he was speaking to a man who might talk, and anxious to protect Margaret from him. "You will please say to her that I will be excused, and that I think it best she should not call again."

The man was gone a long time with this message and then returned with a heated countenance.

"The young lady won't believe you sent the message. She says she will not go away without seeing you, or at least without having a line from you, and she sent in this for you to write on. Don't you think you had better see her? Women folks take things hard, and she seems a —"

"Give me the tablet," interrupted Harry sternly. Margaret had sent him a little ivory tablet with a bit of gold attached that served for a pencil. Harry opened it and wrote on the first page:

"I beg that you will go away and return no more. Your presence here adds to my misery. Believe me, there are other occupations that you will find more interesting than concerning yourself with my melancholy fortune. You may as well save yourself the mortification of calling at this shameful place, for I shall never see you if I can help myself."

As might be expected, the guard read this on his way out.

"Well," he soliloquized, "I did think there was a mistake somewhere, and that we had got the wrong man shut up here, but I guess he's a pretty tough nut, after all."

He handed the tablet to Margaret with an apologetic look.

"He's cranky, Miss. He ain't used to this kind of thing. I wouldn't mind what a man said under—"

"Thank you," said Margaret, reading the message with an immovable face. "I dare say you are right. Thank you for your trouble, sir. Good morning."

"Good morning, ma'am. He must be a chump," he added to himself, "to send a girl like that away. It don't do no man no hurt to have a good woman a-fightin' for him."

Margaret got back into the carriage, and read the note over and over. Then she carefully erased it and put the tablet back in her pocket.

"I can find no excuse for this," she said aloud. "His desire is not to protect me. The mood in which he wrote that was an angry one. I can tell the mood in which a note was written—I always could. I must tread a hard path, it seems. I must work alone, and for a man who does not want me to, and who may only reward me with his disdain after I have succeeded—if I do."

CHAPTER VIII.

The editor of the *Chronicle* was a man distinguished by some traits that made him the butt of the jocular paragrapher and the amusement of his friends. For one thing, he was guilty of being public spirited. The public derived almost as much benefit from his journalistic exploits as did the corporation of which he was president, and for which he worked. He was never afraid, for instance, to take up a matter because it was unpopular, if by so doing he could aid a cause that seemed to him deserving of advocacy. He possessed a large ambition, but it was impersonal in its nature. He was pleased when he was concerned in matters of national importance, not only in a political, but in an educational and moral way as well. And his interest came not from any individual advantage that he expected to derive, but from the pleasure that it gave him to deal with large matters and to work with men of distinction and brains. Consequently, as he was always hunting out the hidden ways of some oppressor, or tracking some notorious rascal to the ground, his office was filled from morning till night with detectives, bent upon various pursuits. He was a sallow, dyspeptic looking man, with teeth that gleamed out of his worn face with a frightful brilliancy. Original, indefatigable, daring, curious, eccentric, he possessed the

very qualities that go to make up the successful journalist, and though but a young man, he was already known as the most distinguished newspaper man in the west.

When the terrible taking off of Henry Leiter became known to him, he sent for his most accomplished man—one who combined the education of a detective with that of a reporter. The *Chronicle* made a point of employing such men, and its pages were noted for the cleverness with which they set before the public the true inwardness of many crimes and mysteries that the courts dealt with indifferently. From the first day Pond had reported to his superior every trifling incident, every impression, that bore on the matter. He had dilated upon the personality of each person who played a part, however small, in this melancholy drama. And he had published no more than would satisfy the curiosity of the public.

The *Chronicle* knew that it could afford to wait. The other papers were sure to waste their powder in ineffectual firing. The *Chronicle* meant to wait till it could see the white s of its enemies eyes. Thus it was that Pond was dismissed from all regular duties and added to the great army of detectives employed by that mighty journal. He was given an assignment, in short, to discover the murderer of Henry Leiter. When he had done so he was to report. Until then he was expected to think of and work at nothing else—whether it took him six days or as many years. And upon his success depended his reputation.

At the outset the labor had been to his liking. But then he had not known what was to befall him. No sooner had he met Margaret than his heart, his mind, his energy, were in danger of becoming enslaved. A depression such as he had never experienced in all his happy-go-lucky life weighed upon him. He was convinced that Margaret and Harry were betrothed, and he felt sure that Harry was innocent, but that there was circumstantial evidence of his guilt that would convict him, unless he or some one else struck the scent of the guilty man. The fact that the clearing of Harry would lessen Pond's chances with Margaret did not, however, have the slightest effect on Ponds determination. Men are already well on the road to villainy when they can consider the details of personal treachery. Pond had too much self-respect to entertain for a moment an idea that he would have been ashamed to put into words. Besides, there was his ambition tugging the other way. If he discovered the murderer of Henry Leiter, his fortune was made, for Melton R. Steele, of the *Daily Chronicle* never forgot a piece of brilliant work, or allowed it to go unrewarded.

One of the first things he did was to visit McCook. But, though the attorney knew the value of being courteous to the people of the press, he would say nothing. Pond was quick to perceive a certain rancor in his manner of speaking about the murder, and he would not rest until he had found what prompted it.

"Young Mr. Leiter is an old friend of yours, I think, Mr. McCook," he ventured.

McCook rubbed his hand over his smooth, fat chin and reflected. His eyes narrowed like a cat's in a bright room. All of a sudden Pond took an intense dislike to him.

"We have known each other since boyhood," he said at length.

"You consider the evidence strong against him?"

"I decline to say, sir. My professional duty will not permit me to pass any judgment upon the case of a man whom I shall, in all probability, have to try for the state."

"It is a very difficult position," went on Dennis, with an affectation of sympathy. "One must naturally shrink from trying a friend. Such a case is surely rare. Of course, we have all read of stern fathers who have preserved the law at the price of their son's lives, and all that. But it is not very often that one good fellow has to turn his back on a friend and make a conscientious effort to send him to the penitentiary."

"A man in my position has no business with any friends."

"Do you mean to say that a man may well expect his friends to turn out cut throats? Such cynicism goes a little too far, Mr. McCook. It shows you are an amateur at scoffing. I dare say you are also well acquainted with Miss Barthwait, that lovely girl I saw at the inquest?"

Pond fired this question out explosively. His

heart beat so for a minute with dread at McCook's reply and disgust at his own impertinence, that he lit a cigar to hide his confusion.

"Certainly," said McCook severely, "and if there is any one thing that can add to the deep damnation of the old gentleman's taking off, it is the fact that Miss Barthwait should be associated with it in any way." There was a palor about his mouth as he spoke, but his lips did not quiver, for he, too, lit a cigar. The weed is a great resource to men.

"I fancy," said Pond in a tone of perfect indifference, "that she has a particular interest in young Mr. Leiter."

His cigar had gone out, and it apparently took all his attention to relight it.

McCook looked at him suspiciously, but could make nothing out of him. He concluded that the reporter was merely impertinent.

"If Miss Brathwait is so unfortunate as to have any connection with that gentleman, she doubtless will end it," he said indiscreetly. Pond had got what he wanted. He learned that McCook disliked Leiter, and that he loved Margaret. The man's voice, his expression, told him all that his words did not convey.

"From all I have seen, Mr. McCook, I gather that you have suspected Leiter of the crime from the first."

"I have told you distinctly, sir, that I would say nothing on the subject."

"It isn't possible, is it," said the imperturbable Pond, "that you and Leiter are rivals?"

"Mr. Pond," cried the attorney, "I desire to end this interview. You are asking questions that you have no right to ask, sir."

"See here, Mr. McCook, you will try this case before the court. I must try it by myself. Straws show which way the wind blows. I am looking for straws."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that you must feel as I do that it is not in the nature of things for young Leiter to have committed that murder. What I want to find out is why you insist on talking as if you believed he did?"

"I have not insisted on talking so. On the contrary, I have refused to talk."

Pond rose and buttoned his coat with smiling nonchalance.

"I am much obliged to you, Mr. McCook, for the aid you have given me."

"Well, I should be pleased to know what infernal nonsense you intend to dish up for the public. If you bring Miss Barthwait's name in this, it will be worse for you."

"My dear fellow," said Pond slowly, and with an infantile smile, "I may look like a cad, but I am not one. Good afternoon."

He got a curt nod in reply. The next thing he did was to call on Harry Leiter. He had always liked Leiter. They knew each other, being as they

were fellow Bohemians. They were apt to meet at midnight in search of clams after a day's work. Harry did a deal of desultory work for the *Chronicle* also, being an especially happy paragrapher. Indeed, he was as full of quips and gibes as a jester of the merry old courts. He was welcomed in the rollicking life of the Bohemian hodge-podge with the same cordiality that he met in fashionable society, and was himself happy everywhere. It was even hinted that he knew much of a social strata that lay far below this smooth and verdant crust. And he himself owned that he liked humanity wherever he found it. His careless and gay stride made him a remarkable figure on the street, where he walked among careworn men with the glad heartiness of a triumphant Adonis, born to eternal youth. Pond could hardly believe that the figure with wild eyes and ghastly face that he saw behind the bars was his old friend.

"For God's sake, old man!" said Pond in a horrified whisper, "don't look so. It will all come out right. Your friends will stand by you."

Harry laughed a miserable, mocking laugh, that had a sound of madness in it.

"I wish to heaven," Pond went on, that you could give me a hint of what to do. My time is my own. I will devote myself to your service. Come, I am not a greenhorn, as you know. Give me a pointer, and I swear the thing will be straightened out."

Harry left his cot and came to the bars.

"My boy," he said, "what I say now is to my friend and not to the professional man."

"Great God, Leiter; you don't think I would give you away, I hope!"

"Well, then, I don't want it straightened out. I had sooner die than not."

Pond stared blankly at him a moment. Then he tried an experiment.

"You look horribly like a guilty man, Leiter," he said distinctly and coldly. "*Are* you one? Did you butcher your uncle?"

The dejection and the fatal dullness vanished in a minute. Harry drew himself up with the old familiar hauteur. His eyes flashed, his hands involuntarily clinched.

"So you take me for a damnable villain, do you?" he began, but Pond cut him short.

"That is what every one will call you if you do not help me to prove your innocence. Now, what are you going to do about it? There is something more the matter with you than grief for your uncle. What is it? I swear if you will tell me I will never betray your secret. Where were you that night, Leiter?"

"I cannot tell!" cried Harry, stretching out his hands with a gesture of despair.

"Do you mean that you don't know? Were you drugged—or drunk?"

"Neither. Old man, it is not my secret."

"There's a woman in the secret, of course," ventured Pond.

A swift wave of color swept over Harry's face.

"Well, I must say, Leiter, I thought you kept free from affairs of that sort."

"It was no affair. The woman is not in the secret, if that is what you mean. I did not speak to a woman that night, nor was I near one. It's no use, Pond. I thank you, but the net is drawn too tight."

"Well, if you want to die without standing to your guns or making a decent defense, it can't be helped. But you mustn't blame me or any of the rest of your friends for thinking such a course cowardly."

"It's anything but that," cried Harry, firing up again. "If I could clear myself, do you not suppose I would?"

"Then you are making a sacrifice of yourself for some one else. You are a darned fool. If I were you, and had a magnificent girl like Miss Barthwait working for me, you had better believe I would not give up."

"It is nothing you can understand," said Harry coldly, turning away to pace the cell. Pond noticed the altered demeanor in a moment, and determined to probe a little deeper.

"I have had a talk with Miss Barthwait," he said, "she is determined to work for you. I never saw such a plucky and enthusiastic woman. You are a lucky dog in some respects, Leiter."

But he received no answer. He peered through the bars to catch a glimpse of Harry's face. It

had grown much paler, and every muscle stood out as if he were placing a terrible restraint upon himself.

"He is suffering on her account," said Pond to himself. "It is evident that he loves her, and yet he does not care to live, or even to be cleared of the suspicion of this crime. Then his suit must be absolutely hopeless. I'll try another brutal experiment."

"I hear Miss Barthwait is engaged to be married to McCook," he said aloud with a gossiping air.

"It's a lie!" cried Harry. Then he stopped suddenly. He drooped his head and his face purpled with pain and mortification. "How should I know? I dare say she is, after all. What of it?"

"Nothing, of course. Here, I'll leave this case of cigars for you. Are they dark enough to suit you? She's a sweet girl, that's all. Good-bye, old man. If I can do anything for you, let me know."

He went back to his room and spent the rest of the day jotting down every remark he had heard spoken that day.

"By the light of future events," he reflected, "the least of these chance speeches may give me the clue."

For the life of him he could not eat, and he stayed in his room till 10 o'clock. It was then too late to get anything at his boarding house, and as he was beginning to feel the pangs of hunger, he determined to go down town to a restaurant.

He walked moodily down North Clark street. Great flakes of snow were falling, and the atmosphere was heavy. The tinkle of the car bells hardly reached the ear, so muffled was the sound on the dull air. The voices of men as they passed him had a far away sound that was almost grotesque, and their figures seemed to loom up to gigantic height in the uncanny grayness.

Stupidly observant, he saw two figures turn down the stairs by the bridge that crosses the river. Those stairs lead to the docks. At night the "wharf rats" take refuge in the doorways here, and the quiet citizen is adverse to venturing near. There were few persons on the street, and so dense was the snow that a man could only be seen at the distance of a few feet. No one but Pond saw these figures disappear, therefore. It struck him as peculiar that two men should care to go down those steep and narrow stairs on such a night. There was apparently no connection between the two men—or at least if there was, it was one that the first man was not conscious of. He was a stooping, miserable creature, half clothed, and with the slouching walk of a professional tramp. The man who followed him, intentionally or otherwise, walked with a firm and dauntless air. Indeed, any one to see him would have said that he was bent on an errand of pleasure. He was closely muffled against the storm, and as he walked along with his head up and his arms actively swinging, he seemed like one unconscious of it.

"Seems as if I knew him," thought Pond. "Wonder what he's going down into that hole for?"

He leaned on the bridge and looked at the curtain of whiteness on the river. A few lights gleamed here and there from the great warehouses and the ships on which some lake sailors were housed for the winter. Suddenly, through the obscurity, Pond heard a muffled cry—or he thought he did. He listened for a repetition. In a minute it came, still fainter. It still seemed a part of the fantastic unrealty of the night, and it seemed a part of it, too, when he found himself slipping and leaping down the treacherous stairs. Not a sound guided him, and he had traversed half the block before he stumbled over the prostrate figure that he had been almost sure he would find. The light from a window high above threw out a mellow glow here. Pond raised the man in his arms, and then he dropped him with a cry that rang through the dense atmosphere up to the street. The poor wretch's throat had been cut from ear to ear, and on his face were grotesque slashes made by a knife, that painted his face with carmine like that of an Indian dressed for battle. Those marks were the counterparts of the ones that had scarred the beautiful face of Henry Leiter.

"Great God!" cried Pond. "God Almighty! Now I shall find the murderer of Henry Leiter. I shall find out why that figure looked familiar. I shall do it!"

The dead body fell off the dock and rolled on the ice of the river. Pond raced along the dock in search of the other man. When the people who had heard Pond's cry reached the spot they found nothing but the dead man.

CHAPTER IX.

There are few catastrophes so great that they can disturb the small things of life. A frightful storm may rage upon the ocean, and the little rills that trickle down from the uplands still sing and sparkle on their way undisturbed. And the pleasant little duties of Margaret's life remained unaltered. She arranged the flowers each morning for the breakfast table, she brought in and warmed her father's paper, she saw to the weekly mending and continued to embroider the Irish linen bed shams in impossible shamrocks. Not a word did she hear from Harry. His conduct was a mystery she could not fathom.

"It is strange," she often remarked to herself, "that I sleep and quietly think, and still enjoy beautiful days, and that I can awake in the morning without pain. I must be a hopelessly healthy person. I hope I am not cold blooded."

The truth about her was that her mind was entirely without morbidity. She had never been given to the fine mental hysterics that afflict the age. She had not been in the habit of attending emotional dramas of the doubtful school, nor did she read the novels of Balzac and Zola, nor the weak imitations of them by Saltus. Her thoughts and feelings were therefore her own, and not those of some conscience-stricken maid of another race and condition of mor-

ality. She was not fond of soliloquizing, and as she had a growing desire to have some one near her that she might talk to, she begged her father one morning to get her a maid or a companion.

"I want a sort of paid friend, you see, papa. Some one that I can talk to, whether I bore her or not. I do not care to go out as I used and the house seems terribly large to me. Let me have a little maid."

"You know nothing about maids, Margaret," said the judge, who was immediately opposed to the idea. "They are all tattlers. Your affairs will be known all over the city."

"I shall make a cautious selection, if you will only give your consent," pleaded the girl. "I think you can hardly imagine how dull it is here all day. Life seems very uninteresting to me at present."

She could not resist the temptation now and then to let him know that she was suffering.

"I do not like another stranger in the house," he said coldly.

Margaret sprang up from the table in a little passion.

"Can you not let me have some conpensation for all I am suffering?" she cried. "I get no help from those I have a right to expect it from. Can you wonder that I want to see if money cannot supply what—" she stopped suddenly and threw her arms around the judge's neck.

"I do love him, papa, and there is no one to help me or even say a word all day."

The judge rubbed one long hand over her sunny hair. It felt deliciously warm and womanly.

"I should think you would wish to keep your thoughts to yourself at such a time," he said kindly, and not take a stranger into your confidence."

"What do you suppose I am going to do," said she impatiently, "I merely want some one to help me pass the days. I am not going to get a common servant. I want some one who may come to be fond of me. I am sure we need not be so afraid of being spied on. We do nothing that we are afraid of having found out, I hope."

"Afraid of having found out!" cried the judge angrily. I wish you would get over the habit of talking at random, Margaret. So many women say everything they think, no matter how preposterous the thought. For heavens' sake get the girl, who ever she is."

"I beg your pardon papa," said Margaret in a hurt tone, "I am sure I did not mean to bother. I will not get any one if you do not like the idea. I meant no harm. I know I am impertinent sometimes. Forgive me."

She kissed him and went out of the room. The day seemed an unusually long one to her. The heavy curtains at her windows shut the dull winter light, and she bent low over her work as she sat in her low chair plodding over her embroidery. She worked at it with as much persistency as if she were earning her daily bread by it, and as she worked, she thought. She had visited every place

where it seemed at all likely that Harry would go, and without finding any trace of that night visit. In spite of his coldness, she had tried to communicate with him by letter, but her letters had been returned unopened. If she went out for a walk, she was sure to find herself near the gloomy place where he was kept, till she had grown to have a horror of solitary walks. Her fashionable friends treated her in a manner that was calculated to be the most seemly for the trying circumstances, but their studied efforts to be kind, hurt the poor girl more than their neglect would have done.

"Society is never more disagreeable," she said to herself, "than when it undertakes to be magnanimous."

In the midst of all of this, and while the tears were falling down on the linen she still held, the solemn housekeeper made her appearance. She had recently taken to wearing a band of crape around her head. Not that she had lost any friend that Margaret could learn of, but that she thought it gave her a sort of melancholy dignity.

"There's a young woman comin' behind me miss," she said, almost with tears,one would have thought who was not acquainted with her peculiarities, "who says the judge sent her up to see about getting a place as maid." "Send her right in," cried Margaret, cordially, smiling to think, how soon her father had repented. McKee, mournful, left for the kitchen and a little maid entered. As she lifted the curtain and came into the room, Margaret could

have laughed aloud at the irresistible figure she made. She was short and plump. A cloak of dark blue covered her from head to foot, and on a head of firey red curls sat a cap of muskrat fur. Freckles large and red spotted her flushed and delicate skin, and a pair of humorous eyes shone out upon the young lady in azure honesty.

"Come in," said Margaret. "I am Miss Barthwait. Did my father ask you to see me?"

"Yes," said the young woman in a ringing voice, and breaking into a smile that revealed a set of beautiful teeth, "I was on the street car talking with a friend and saying that I would like very much to live with some young lady in the city, and your father heard me and asked me up to his office. When I had told him all about myself he sent me up."

"Perhaps you might tell me over again. What sort of a place did you want? Why do you leave home? I am sure you have never been away before."

"Could you tell that really? Papa is a farmer out here near Lawndale. There are other girls at home, and there is no need of me. I thought I would like to take care of myself—but not exactly as a servant, Miss Barthwait." Margaret made a depreciating gesture.

"Oh, of course." she murmured.

"I've been through common school," went on the little damsel in a voice very much too loud for the necessities of the occasion. "And I can read well and sing a little and sew. I know how to take care of sick people, and I would be very glad to do

any work about the room—" But she got no farther. She had unfastened her cloak and let it fall back from her shoulders. As she did so, a black velvet ribbon made its appearance around her neck, and on this was an ornament that fixed Margaret's attention. It was an intaglio of strong execution, such a toy as a connoisseur in gems would effect, and certainly the last thing that one would expect to see in the possession of a little farmer girl.

"Tell me," said Margaret excitedly, "where you got that beautiful intaglio you wear on your neck."

She tried in vain to speak with indifference. She felt the blood rush into her cheeks, and knew that her breath was making a noise as it came hotly between her quivering lips. The little maid turned scarlet also.

"I have only had it a little while," she said; "father was going to town one morning when he found a young gentleman lying on the snow. Father thought he was frozen at first. He picked him up and put him in the wagon and drove him to town. Before he had reached the city, the young man had come to himself, and when he left he gave father this off his silk watch ribbon. Father didn't think much of it; but I thought it beautiful, and so he gave it to me."

"Allow me," gasped Margaret, fingering it tremblingly. "Could you tell me the date, my dear, when this was found? I mean when the young man was found."

"Why, the truth is, Miss Barthwait, I am not

very good at remembering dates, and one day is so much like another on the farm, that commonly we know little about them. And yet I think I could remember this after all, for father was making an effort to get to town to buy a dress for ma. It was ma's birthday, and that was on the 15th of January —or at least—"

"Try to think, my dear," whispered Margaret, seizing the cold plump hands in hers and looking straight in the pretty blue eyes. "Try to be sure. "

"Yes, I am quite sure, Miss Barthwait. It was the 15th. Ma's birthday comes on the 16th, and this was the day before."

"Take off your coat," said Margaret, taking it off for her as she spoke. "I am sure you are going to stay with me. I am a very lonely girl, and I need a friend. Take off your cap. We shall have some tea. Kindly push that bell behind you. Now, set down and tell me something more about the young man. Did your father think he had—had been drinking?"

"No, no, he did not think that. He thought he seemed sick or confused. He didn't seem quite in his right mind."

"Perhaps he had been drugged or hit on the head."

"Perhaps. I did not see him, of course. Father thought him a very handsome young man, and he said he could see that he was a gentleman with elegant manners, just from the way he parted from him. I always felt interested in him."

"Of course," said Margaret, clasping her hands, "naturally."

"When he left," went on the little damsel, stretching her feet to the fire, "he gave pa this. Pa didn't want it, you know, pa doesn't care for fancy things, so he gave it to me."

"Where did the strange young man go when he left your father?" inquired the listener.

"Pa said he saw him go into a Turkish bath house."

"Where, where?" gasped Margaret. The blue eyes of her small guest were beginnng to open very wide, and her cheeks to flush a deeper crimson.

"It was on Monroe, near State, I think. I heard pa mention it. You see, we have so few things to talk about that we are apt to make much of little. It's strange that it should interest you so much, Miss Bar—"

"My dear," sobbed Margaret, finding that her composure must go, and instinctively deciding to let it go dramatically, "it is not at all strange, for that young man is my own dear Harry, and he is being tried for a murder that was committed that night. You see if I could prove where he was I might save him from all suspicion."

The little stranger fell to trembling with earnestness and sympathy.

"I shall just stay on and help you, poor dear child. I beg your pardon, Miss Barthwait, but you won't mind, will you? Don't you cry now, don't you do it. Maybe we will be able to prove exactly what you

want. It almost seems as if I had been guided here. Don't you think that people are sometimes guided? Think if I had not worn that charm!"

"Think, think," sobbed Margaret. "Kiss me, my dear. I am so thankful I have found a friend. I have been terribly lonesome. I've tried to be brave, but I'm only a girl, and girls need friends." Then the two sat down and cried together. That rivited their friendship.

Later on in the day, they were both embroidering remarkable shamrocks on those shams, and the little damsel had sent home for her trunk. That evening —or rather in the early dusk that preceded evening—the two made their way to the bath house, where it was supposed that Harry had gone on that fateful night. To be sure, they were met at the door by a gesticulative Frenchman, who shrieked, with a wild flinging about of his arms, that they were on the wrong side, and that to reach the ladies' bath they must go through the hair store—the latter word not translated. But Margaret calmly persisted, and they were finally admitted to the luxurious ante-room. Even here the warm moisture from the hot room floated out to them, laden with a strange perfume, languorous and oriental. The little damsel stared around with wide eyes, but Margaret kept her lids over hers, lest the fever in them should attract attention. It took a great deal of persuasion on her part to induce the man to examine his books for her, and she had to tell him finally that a dear friend of hers had dis-

appeared. She said she had heard of his being at the bath rooms on the 15th of January. She wished to make sure.

The man smelled a romance, and being a Frenchman, that conquered him. He refused in two languages—and then yielded. Sure enough, the gentleman had been there. No, he remembered nothing about him. He had evidently come early in the morning, for his name was the first on that day's list. Could he escort the lady to her carriage? No? He saluted her then, and was delighted to have been of service, and so he bowed the young woman out, and dreamed of Margaret's face for fifteen minutes—which was a long time for a man like him. There was no denying that Margaret was very comely. The little damsel, whose name, by the way, was Jeanne Whitfield, thought so, too. That evening, as Margaret sat playing one of those ever-sweet things of Chopin's that women love as they do all confections, the little damsel, sitting beside her, could hardly conceal her enthusiasm.

What the little damsel was thinking, some one else was thinking also in another part of the city. Let the light be ever so low, or his eyes be ever so dim, still Harry Leiter saw those beautiful hands and heard mysterious melodies that they played—heard them day and night. They played pure melodies, and in vain did his tired brain try to force them to jangle ribald ballads and coarse snatches. Always there came back to his shrinking, yet

fascinated ears, the same lovely strains. Now it was Schubert's serenade, dying in melancholy tenderness; again it was "The Wanderer," full of divine despair; sometimes it was a resonant chorus from the great master whom Margaret loved above all others. And she could be false and yet play those true things. But she was incapable of feeling, and could not know that she was committing sacrilege. If she had accepted his devotion poured so passionately at her feet, and known all the time that she was lying and laughing, she, of course, could play a hymn to truth with her degraded hands and see no inconsistency, and suffer no remorse. A coarser man than Harry would have raged at the falsity of his mistress, but he could hardly have suffered as Harry did. All his life he had been given to dreams. A poem had been his pastime, the possession of a new song or a fair picture, his greatest reward. It was a strange atmosphere in which to raise a lad in the nineteenth century, and in a commercial city like Chicago, and it might have made a mental weakling out of a different sort of a man. But physically, Harry was the embodiment of strength, and he was protected by a spontaneous sense of humor which never deserted him, and which kept him at all times from being ridiculous. It made him love life, and all sorts of life.

He could drink cheap wine in the fantastic little Italian restaurant, with the dusky musicians from the west side theatres, with the same grace and

enjoyment that he quaffed an after-dinner glass and told his most delicious stories at the most fashionable residence on Dearborn Avenue. But now no merry spirit of mirth lightened his misery. The accent of the attendant at which he had smiled for a day or two had become familiar. He heard nothing but Margaret's melodies swelling louder and louder. So it made no impression on him at all when a note from a friend conveyed the simple intelligence that he would call on him the next day and see about securing defense. The grand jury had held him to the criminal court.

He really felt little interest in the matter. But as he lay down, he saw, in his dozing, a man climbing, with fatal familiarity, the lattice to Margaret's window. He saw the light flare up in that room and burn brightly for a time. Then it went out. There was nothing but the light and its silence. And so he dropped to sleep with her music ringing in his ears.

CHAPTER X.

A transformation was taking place in William McCook. Until now he had preserved his self respect. He had been in the habit of setting down any covert meanness in which he might indulge, as an eccentricity of character, or as one of the necessary incidents of business. But his life was a climax, and he was dimly conscious of it. All his life—ever since he felt or reasoned—he had thought Margaret Barthwait the center of the universe.

Around her all his thoughts had clustered from early boyhood. At college he had been a brilliant student, and every honor had been earned for her. At the same time he had been able to lead a life of almost reckless pleasure, which he kept diligently from her ears. Slefish, vain, aggressive, he had been far from popular. And to this he was indifferent. He was in the favor of the professors, and when he left school and entered business he still had the faculty for winning the favor of those in power. Perhaps one reason for this was the ability he showed as an organizer. Scheming men recognized in him a powerful ally. He was just the man to give valuable aid to a political machine, if once his own interests were involved. His worst qualities had therefore proved his best friends. As his successes increased his arrogance grew, till at

last it became so great that he thought he had only to desire anything to get it. Margaret's rejection of him, and for a man whom he despised as effeminate and insignificant, instead of humiliating him, filled him with bitterness. And on the day that he openly admitted to himself that he would be avenged by fair means or foul, he lost his self-respect. From that moment he knew, and his weeping guardian angel knew, that he would stop at nothing. From that moment he was given up to greed of place, and triumph, and money. As soon as it was declared that Harry was to be tried for the murder of his uncle, and fixed that McCook was to represent the state in the case, he set every energy to the campaign in hand. He was a coarse man, and like all coarse men, had a sort of clouded intelligence, or he would have recognized the fact that hurting Harry's chances would not help his own, nor could he realize that a woman of Margaret's character would infinitely prefer a guilty man to one who could work against a friend. But McCook believed that Margaret would think him the victim of his position, as indeed he was, to an extent. He did not give her credit for the shrewdness to discover the animus of his work. He had never had very much respect for her intellect, nor for the intellect of any woman. Men of his stamp are not apt to have. It was from no feeling of mental affinity that he loved her. The love of such men is a peculiar thing. It may be taken as a sort of abstract passion, existing in them from their birth

just as much as their muscular strength. Chance directs the course of it. And when once it is fixed, it becomes a sort of insanity.

He sat in his office late one afternoon, when Dennis Pond entered. Pond lifted his hat with the most elaborate ceremony, which put McCook on his guard immediately. He thought he was mocking, and it may have been possible. The young newspaper man had been known to do worse things.

"I am perfectly aware that you are not dying to see me," said Pond, with a well developed smile, "but the truth is, Mr. McCook, I couldn't stay away any longer." McCook with difficulty refrained from throwing him out of the office. There was something about the fellow's good-natured insolence that infuriated him. His look of resentment caused Pond to leisurely unbotton his overcoat, take it off, hang it on the hook, and sit down. Next he took off his overshoes. Then he passed his cigar case to McCook. The attorney refused with a shake of the head. Pond drew forth a cigar, lit it, puffed at it slowly and said:

"Thank goodness I've got nothing more to do but talk to you this afternoon!"

This was more than the attorney could stand.

"Then, sir," he retorted angrily, "I am a very unfortunate man, for I have not the time to listen."

"Dear, dear," ejaculated Pond in a pained tone, "and the matter was so interesting, too." McCook, hardly able to contain his temper, had taken up his pen and begun writing again.

"You see," Pond went on, nibbling at the end of his cigar, "I think I have stumbled upon the man who killed poor old Leiter."

He would not have been the man he was, had he not caught the look that darted into the attorney's eyes at these words. McCook did not trust himself to say much. He only guided his voice into an interrogatory tone and murmured:

"Well?"

"That is why," Pond went on, picking up a paper and stopping to read a paragraph and laugh over it, "that I am so sorry you have no time to listen. Of course, I thought that you, as a conscientious man, would be glad to hear that you might not suffer the painful duty of prosecuting your friend."

"Certainly," said McCook, off his guard, and forgetting what he had said to Pond on that very subject the last time he had seen him. "I will take time to listen to anything that concerns business, of course."

Pond digressed and trifled, and yawned through the story of the murder on the wharf. He told how the marks on the face had resembled those that disfigured the countenance of the old collector. He all but proved that the two crimes must have been commited by the same man.

"And the strangest thing of all," he continued, looking at McCook with a sudden sharpness, "is that the figure of the man who did the killing was certainly familiar. Mr. McCook, have you any

idea, could you make any wild guess, as to whom that person could be?"

"How should I?" asked McCook, impatiently. "What means could I have for knowing?"

"Well, you are a shrewd man," said Pond, in the first sincere accents he had used, "and I thought you might have suspected some one of leading a strange, half-insane life. I don't know how to express myself. But I cannot understand why that figure looked so familiar. You know what a faithful mechanical machine the mind is! When I saw that figure, I remembered afterward that I thought of you. Now do not misunderstand me. It did not bear the faintest resemblance to you. But I thought of you. There must have been some undiscovered association of ideas in that. This happened, mind you, before I had any reason to suspect him of anything. My idea is that it was someone that I had some time seen with you. Try to help me out. Try to think of any half-mad friend, or anyone likely to have complex associations."

"I confess your clews are too slight for me. And I do not at all agree with you in thinking that the man who murdered Mr. Leiter was the one who killed this beggar. The fact that both victims were killed in the same way argues nothing. No one has a better opportunity than yourself for knowing that crimes are frequently epidemic. As long as the papers make a practice of publishing all details of murders and suicides and other crimes, so long will those crimes become epidemic."

"If I were in your place, Mr. McCook," said Pond, still with perfect good nature, "I would look into

the matter before I pronounced on it in that way. if I had an old friend whose life was at stake."

"I know my duty, sir," the attorney returned, rising and putting his hands behind him.

"Now, don't be melo-dramatic," said Pond with a yawn. "Of course if you wan't to see your friend hung it's none of my affair."

"In my profession I have no friends," McCook said in a stately way.

"I guess that's so," replied Pond with a peculiar intonation.

"What do you mean, sir?" gasped McCook, white and trembling.

"I mean," said Pond with a fine sparkle in his eye, and smiling with unusual sweetness, "that I have given you one last chance to prove yourself a good fellow. You haven't done it. I think—and you can take it as an insult or not as you please—that you want to see that poor lad hung. You know the reason better than I. Good day, sir."

CHAPTER XI.

It was possible from Margaret's window to view Lake Michigan, which even in winter wears a wild beauty. She and the little damsel were exceedingly fond of sitting where they could see it. A gray mist with shimmerings of blue lay about the horizon, and the chopped ice ground cruelly against the mighty piers and break-water. The melancholy thunder came even through the thick walls of the judge's substantial mansion, and played its dread accompaniment to Margaret's thoughts. A hundred times a day she had cause to be thankful for the presence of the little damsel. Hardly out of childhood yet, Jeanne was full of the mystic passion that belongs to that period. There was nothing artificial about her, and she was as free from self-consciousness as a humming bird.

They had taken to sewing for the little ones at the foundling's home, and Margaret used laughingly to say, looking at the pile of blue gingham aprons, that she had become a sister of charity and renounced the world. To be sure, she made one or two attempts at diversion, fearing that it must be dull for the little damsel. On one occasion she took the country maid to the fortnightly—the fashionable literary club of the city—a woman's club exclusively. But when Jeanne got home she had a sick headache and that night she cried herself to

sleep with homesickness, so that Margaret concluded the air of the fortnightly was too tropical for her wayside flower and did not venture into its rarified atmosphere again. After that they went on quietly making blue gingham aprons—in the shadow of a scaffold.

After Margaret had found that Harry had been to the bath house on that memorable day, she was brought to a standstill. There were terrible moments when she really entertained a fleeting suspicion of his guilt, but, woman-like, she did not so much suspect him because of the damaging circumstantial evidence against him, as because of his inexplicable behavior to her. There were times when she thought he must be insane—what else could furnish a clew to his conduct? And if he could break her heart, was it not also possible that he might have murdered his uncle? Thus did Margaret reason. And, blinded by the horror, she worked day and night, talked, sang, lived a sort of second life which bore little relation to her real one.

She could not quite forgive her father for his cruelty, as she deemed it, to Harry, and a hardly recognized coldness had come between them. They still sat together at twilight, but the hour was a painful one to Margaret. She could not have told why, but it was certain that these visits left her nervous and wearied. The judge seemed restless, too, and he had a feverish way of regarding his daughter that made her think he was secretly remorseful for his unkindness, and only lacked the

courage to say so. Indeed, on two or three occasions he had sprung from his chair and rushed toward her, in a way most unlike his usual calm. She had always stretched out her arms for him, and on each occasion he had clasped her with a fierceness that had frightened her; then would his breath come hard and his whole frame tremble as if he feared to lose her.

They were sitting quietly together one evening, talking, when the servant entered. He bore a card on a silver plate. "It is that reporter from the *Chronicle*," the judge said, with some impatience. "I wonder what he can want."

"Oh, ask him in," returned Margaret. She remembered him with some gratitude. He had never betrayed a word of her confidence, and she imagined that this must be a great sacrifice to a professional news-gatherer. Besides, she thought, there might be something new in the case they were all so interested in. Had not Pond told her that in the future he should have nothing to do but work on the murder? His statement was evidently not strictly accurate, however, for as he entered with an apology, and saluted first the judge and then herself, he said:

"I have come to trouble you for five minutes, Judge Barthwait, about the law enacted by the legislature yesterday, making it a crime for cousins to marry in this state. I want your opinion concerning its advisability. Can it be enforced, and if so, does it not interfere with personal liberty?"

The judge wore a relieved expression. It was evident that he, too, had expected the reporter's visit to be connected with the murder. Pond had seated himself near one of the book-cases by accident, and as his eye fell on them, he seemed to become fascinated. With his head bent respectfully toward the judge, to indicate that he was listening to all he said, he arose and followed the titles of the books along the shelves with an appreciative eye. Almost all collectors of books are proud to have their selections admired, even by the humblest, but the judge was an exception to the rule, or else he thought that the young man had committed an unpardonable rudeness in dividing his attention while he was talking to him. He regarded Pond's investigations with an angry eye, and when the young man drew a note book from his pocket and began to write in it, the judge interrupted him.

"May I ask what you are putting down in that note book?" he remarked.

"I am not always willing to rely entirely on my memory for an interview," Pond replied.

"Then you are putting down my opinion?" interrogated the judge, suspiciously.

"What should I be putting down, sir?" retorted Pond, with an injured look.

"I beg your pardon," said the judge. "To be sure, what should you be putting down? Do you write short-hand?"

"Well, yes, I do when I take notes. I am rather ashamed of it though. Most men who write short-hand are unqualified for the business."

"Indeed!" remarked the judge. "Why?"

"Because a newspaper man should see the world with the eye of a novelist, and not an amanuensis."

"Surely," returned the judge. He was silent a moment, as if thinking the matter over. "In what else can I serve you?" he asked at length.

Pond was still busy with the book-cases. Even Margaret, sitting in her customary corner by the fire, was not able to win his attention. She was looking pale, but none the less beautiful. The fire-light, glancing about her, brought out splendid gleams of copper in her gown, and gleams of gold in her hair—not that her hair was gold, but it held certain imprisoned tints, as an opal does. Pond saw all this out of the corner of his eye, and it may have been that which made him tremble and grow pale. Margaret broke the silence, which she saw was irritating her father.

"I dare say you are a collector of curious books yourself, Mr. Pond," she remarked in her self-contained way.

"A poor man cannot be much of a collector, Miss Barthwait, but I have a shelf or two in my room."

At this moment the judge strode over to where Pond was still making notes in his book, and held out his hand for it. "You can hardly be taking my remarks down when I am making none," he said. "May I ask what you are doing, once more? Permit me to see your book, sir."

Margaret arose and stood flushing scarlet at the

judge's rudeness. Pond colored, too, but he gave the book to the judge with a bow.

"It is certainly at your disposal, sir," he said. "And I only regret that it is in short-hand."

The judge held it a moment, looked at it with a sort of dull expression, like a man who had been eating opium, and then returned it without apology.

"Papa!" cried Margaret, in distress, but he paid no attention to her. Pond, anxious to relieve her embarrassment, bowed and withdrew. The judge, still seeming to be under that opium-like cloud, preceded him to the door, and as he walked, the reporter's eyes were riveted on him.

"Has everyone gone mad, or is it only me?" cried Margaret to herself. Just then the little damsel entered by another door. Margaret seized her by the wrist.

"Go into the hall, quick, Jeanne," she whispered. "Seem to go by accident, and notice what papa and the gentleman with him are doing. They act so queer! Run!"

Jeanne went out by the door that she entered, and reached the hall through a cloak room. The judge was leaning against the tall newel post, looking at the reporter with hot eyes. Pond was returning the look steadily but calmly, as he slowly buttoned his overcoat. Jeanne stood still in amazement, hardly believing her eyes. Suddenly Pond caught sight of her. She was so round and

dimpled, so homely and jolly, that he could have cried out with relief. Her red hair curled more fiercely than ever; her blue eyes were stretched to their widest; her warm brown dress and dainty mull apron were so suggestive of comfort and femininity that she seemed like an angel to him. The judge saw her, too, and saying, "you let this gentleman out, Jeanne," he turned and mounted the stairs. Pond followed him to the top with his eyes, and then he turned to the little damsel and lifted his hat.

"I beg your pardon," he said absently.

"Yes, sir," returned Jeanne, blushing.

"Are you Miss Barthwait, also?" ventured Pond. "I beg your pardon for asking."

"I'm Miss Barthwait's maid, sir. At least, she doesn't call me that exactly. I read to her—and—things."

"How delightful," said Pond. "Perhaps you will be good enough, then, to carry a line to her that I am going to write."

The little damsel said she would be good enough, and Pond tore a leaf out of the troublesome notebook and wrote on it. Then he gave it to Jeanne.

"Permit me to ask your name," he said.

"Well," said Jeanne, doubtfully. "Of course, if you want to. It's Jeanne Whitfield, and I'm a farmer's daughter."

"Thank you, Miss Whitfield. Mine is Pond. I hope you'll remember it and me, for we may both be of use to Miss Barthwait yet. Good-night."

He lifted his hat in a manner that the little damsel thought ravishing, and departed. Then she took the line to her mistress. Margaret still stood by the fire, with the frightened look on her face.

"The young man sent you this little note," ventured Jeanne, somewhat frightened herself again, now that the splendid young man was gone. Margaret opened it, and then dropped it with a cry of amazement and dread. It read:

MISS BARTHWAIT: For God's sake see that your bedroom doors are locked tonight and all nights. See to it well, I beg from my innermost heart.

Yours faithfully, DENNIS POND.

CHAPTER XII.

A quick instinct told Margaret that she must not take the little damsel into her confidence. She picked up the paper, and, kissing her companion good night, mounted to her own room. There she sat down to work out the puzzle. Had the reporter discovered a plot to burglarize the house? Or was he simply trying a sensational experiment. She decided at last to follow his instructions, and she hurried down the dim hall to where Mrs. McKee, the melancholy housekeeper, slept. The good soul was in bed, with her hair done up in a black cambric night cap. She looked up with a startled glance as Margaret entered, as much as to say:

"It has come at last. I have always known that misfortune would overtake us, and here it is." She really suffered some disappointment when Margaret said:

"Why not lock your door for a few nights, Mrs. McKee? The papers are full of accounts of burglaries these last few days. I would feel safer if we all had our doors locked."

"That's so," assented the McKee, drawing a handkerchief from under her pillow, where she kept it ready for any mournful emergency, and wiping her eyes. "No one knows what may happen, Miss Margaret, and in the midst of life—"

"Now, Mrs. McKee!" protested Margaret, "don't tell any home truths this evening."

"It is well enough for you to joke, Miss Margaret. You are not so old as I, and you have not seen what I have seen."

"No, dear McKee, and I don't think I want to. Here, kiss me good-night, like the good old soul you are. I couldn't get along without you, McKee."

"And yet, miss," said the McKee, letting fall some salt drops, "who knows at what hour we may be separated?" With these encouraging words ringing in her ears, Margaret went on to the rooms of the other servants and called to them to make fast their doors. There were so many burglars in the neighborhood, she explained to them. There was only Jeremiah and Lotta, the assistant of McKee, and she heard them both get up sleepily and make fast their doors.

Then she went to Jeanne. That small person was trying in vain to comb the snarls out of her brilliant curls, and dropping shining tears of pain on her lap in the process. Margaret fastened the door behind her and assisted at this heroic task. She found it harder to introduce the subject of the burglars here, but she finally plucked up heart to say that she was nervous, and that she would feel safer if the doors were locked. There was a door opening from Jeanne's room to hers, and she left this ajar, when she made her final good-night, and left

the red head peeping above the bed clothes. Still she had not warned the judge. She could not rest till she had, and yet she felt like a child who knows that it will be reprimanded. But it must be done, so she ran along the hall to her father's room. The transom was all dark, so she concluded that he was abed, and pushed open the door without knocking.

The judge was sitting by the window in the moonlight, and as Margaret entered he started up with a frightened cry.

"Margaret!" he exclaimed, in relief, when he saw who it was, "try to give a little warning of your approach, my dear! You frightened me."

"Dear me," she said reproachfully, "I am always doing something stupid. What are you sitting in the dark for, papa?"

"I'm not sleepy yet. I sometimes find it hard to sleep now." He sat down again, and went on absently drawing a pocket-knife over his boot to sharpen it. "I ought to have a rest."

"That you ought, papa. You haven't seemed like yourself lately."

"Have you noticed a change?" cried the judge, pulling her down to his knee. "What does the change seem like, Margaret? Describe it to me. Is it anything that any but you would notice, do you think?"

He looked feverish now, and the hand that lay on Margaret's was hot. The other hand still held the knife, and the thumb rubbed back and forth over the edge.

"It isn't easy to describe," said Margaret, slowly, "I should say that you did not enjoy life as much as you used, and yet I think I have noticed more force in you than I used—I don't know just how to express it exactly. But I should say your will was stronger, or that your nature had increased in intensity. Do you know, papa, that I have an idea that you are a good man. I cannot tell you how proud I am of you."

She brought her sentence to a sudden stop, for the knife fell on the floor with a little clangor against the metal claw at the foot of the chair.

"You love me, Margaret?" he said, taking her face between his hands and looking into it with deep eyes.

"More than words can say. Can you doubt it?" her eyes filled with tender tears.

"In spite of the change you see in me, you love me still?" he persisted.

"It is not a change that makes any difference with your loveliness, so why should I not love you just the same?"

"I thank Heaven for you, my daughter. I thank Heaven for its great gift to me. Who am I, that I should have such a pure and delicate thing for my own!"

Margaret moved uneasily and strugled from his embrace. She did not like to see the sadness settling upon him, and her nature shrank from the display of emotion. According to her wholesome theory, there was need of nothing but hearty kisses

and natural deeds of kindness between those who loved each other. She objected to protestations.

"I came in to ask you to lock your door at night, papa. I am going to lock mine every night. I hear there are some terrible burglars about. You read of that robbery last night? Besides, ever since Uncle Leiter's death I have felt nervous."

"That's right," said the judge, rising and pacing back and forth in a strip of moonlight, "make your doors fast—and your windows, Margaret, your windows! See to it that the window above the porte cochere is fastened See to it every night. Especially if I am absent-minded, or—or changed, see to it. I might forget to look after it myself, you know. But I will try to make the round of the house every evening, and see that it is safe. I am glad of your determination, Margaret. You are right to be cautious. Good-night."

"But you will lock your doors too, will you not?" Margaret pleaded.

"Take no thought of me. I will look to myself, never fear. God keep you safe, my girl, now and always. May you rest in His care."

He kissed her twice on the brow and turned her out into the hall. Soothed, she returned to her room, fastened the door as he had instructed, and in a few moments was lying in a flood of moonlight in her white bed, thinking of Harry. She had almost fallen asleep when she heard the handle of her door tried. She sat up with a startled cry of:

"Who is it?"

The voice of her father replied:

"I wanted to make sure that you had made it safe," he called. "Did you make the window safe, too?"

"Everything is safe," returned she.

"All right. Lie down and sleep, my child. God keep you." A few moments later her bosom rose in regular pulsations. She was asleep.

The morning came and found all as usual. It was a beautiful morning, with an intensely blue sky and a lake of dazzling icebergs of miniature size on a sea that reflected the sky. The apprehensions of the night before seemed absurd enough now, especially as Margaret and Jeanne sat at the breakfast table with the judge, who was in one of his best moods, and told them stories. The sunshine always seems brighter after a storm, and the happiness of the morning thrilled Margaret with a new pleasure, after the depression of the last few days. She followed her father to the door, and after she had reluctantly seen him depart, she opened the piano and played for an hour, to the great delight of the little damsel, who skipped about the drawing room in time to the music, like a kid in a spring meadow. In the midst of this matutinal merriment a blue-uniformed messenger boy brought a note for Margaret. Following an impulse, she ran to her room and closed the door. Was it possible that she had recognized the handwriting?.

She tore it open and then braced herself for a moment before she found courage to glance at the signature. It was: "Your repentant Harry—Your

lover." She did not read the letter for a few mo ments. She dropped on her knees first, and her pure thanks arose as her pure tears fell.

My Margaret [it began], I stand abjectly before you for pardon. There may have been worse sinners than I in the world, but I cannot recall them. Let me confess everything to you immediately.

"It cannot be that he is guilty," whispered poor Margaret to herself, thinking only of the murder at the time.

I have doubted you, Margaret, [the letter went on]. You cannot imagine how loathsome I must seem to myself, when I confess to you now that so contemptible were these doubts, that I would not even dare tell you the character of them. You would hardly understand me if I did, and the consciousness of this fact makes me wonder if I was a mad man. I shall not tell you just the form that my crime took till some happier day, when I am free and you are my wife—if that time ever comes. I have terrible moments, when I fear that you will cast me off utterly as unworthy of you. If I was more fortunately placed I am almost sure you would. But I am base enough to count on your pity for my present plight. I think you will perhaps forgive me for my misfortunes. For I am indeed unfortunate, beloved. I am innocent of all of which I stand accused, and I must not prove it. Oh! love me still, lest I despair utterly! So inexplicable and terrible was the thing that made me suspect you of—not loving me—that it is little wonder I could not meet it with rejection. You will agree with me when I am able to tell you of it.

But I do not write you to-day to tell you of the love that has tormented me like a madness since

I have been in this place; nor to tell you what a benediction that love has become, now that I know you are my own bright and tender girl; nor to beg forgiveness for the shameful sacrilege of my conduct; though I might write all day on these subjects and not exhaust them.

I write, my darling, my poor dove, to tell you that you are in great danger. The nature of this danger I cannot tell you. I may seem cruel to warn you. Perhaps it will do no good, and will only cause you suffering. You could escape that danger, which I hope is only temporary, by going away for a time. If you would make me happy, go away from home to visit some friends, and stay till I write you to return. Believe that I have the most important reasons in the world for this. Our happiness depends upon it. I would say more, but dare not, and there are things that cannot be told with the pen. My lips must speak them when my arm is around you, poor lonely one, to comfort you. And mark me now! Make fast your windows and your doors each night when you go to bed. Let nothing tempt you to forget or neglect this. Let me ask you to read my words twice—three times. I do not speak from idle impulse.

Oh, God! That I were free! That I could go to you! That you should need me, and I not free to give you aid. Do not come to see me. I have reason to suppose it would increase your danger. If Mr. Pond, the reporter, has occasion to come to the house, do not seem to pay any attention to him. He is our true friend, and it is for our sakes that he makes this request. He tells me you have a pleasant little companion. I am thankful for that. Keep her always near you. If you have any message to send to me, let her take it to the office of the *Chronicle* and deliver it to him. On no account go to the office of the *Chronicle* yourself.

After you have read my letter two or three times, so as to remember all that I have told you, burn it. Do not neglect to follow this instruction. Burn it where the ashes will not be noticed.

Oh, my girl! my girl! Our life promised so happily! To what misery have we been brought! It does not seem as if it could be us, does it? And I have added so much to your suffering and my own, by my criminal stupidity. But if you knew what I have endured—what nights of terrible sleeplessness, what days of dread and almost madness, I think you might find it in your heart to forgive. I suppose I can never seem just the same to you—you will not trust me as you did your old lover, whose devotion was unstained with treachery or distrust—but give me something, some poor shadow of the old love. Mind, I do not expect too much. A little will content me till I have earned the right to ask for more. It seems to me that I know the awful anxiety of those who stand outside the door of Heaven and wait to hear their sentence. What shall it be, Margaret? I send you, my dear, a kiss.

It may have the chill of death on it, for it may yet come that I shall have to die. Think of me so, and pray for me. It is true, I might be saved, but the price is too great. And yet—there are other things that I cannot tell you. Go from home at once, and until you go, guard yourself day and night.

Take none—none—in your confidence. Farewell. Oh! that this world were big enough to let us love each other somewhere in peace. Time is so old, we are so small and unimportant! Why should we be interfered with? Would it make any difference in the economy of the world if we were happy? I am incoherent, but I cannot see why fate should trouble herself with us. Farewell, again.

Your repentant

HARRY—your lover.

"Great God," sighed Margaret, remembering nothing but the love in what she had read, "how different your sunshine can be made to look in one little minute!"

CHAPTER XIII.

The next morning early, Pond sought admittance to Harry. The two young men looked at each other with understanding eyes.

"All is well," said Pond. He handed a note through the bars. The guard looked at the young men inquiringly, but he accepted Pond's wink as a guarantee of good faith and said nothing.

"Thank God," cried Harry, "she is going away, Pond. You will see that she goes quickly."

"I'll do what I can, my boy. I wonder if she is going to take the little red-headed girl with her? That little girl is a brick, sir. She came up to the office this morning looking as cheerful as a woodpecker. She was all done up in furs, and was more like a small princess than a maid. Not a word could I get out of her. Would she sit down? No, she would not. Would she take the elevator? No, she preferred the stairs. She would do nothing but blush, apparently, and that she did like an angel. 'Miss Barthwait sent her sincere thanks,' and she must be going, and she went. I heard her little shoes clanking on the iron stairs as she went down. Why she refused to wait for the eleavtor I can't imagine."

It was Pond's way to keep up a great chatter when he came to see Harry, and he was not very particular what it was about. "Even a man on the

verge of the grave likes to be amused," reasoned Pond with himself, "and if one must die, it had better be by the rope, than with ennui."

"You are in love with the red-headed girl," said Harry, smiling at him wanly. He expected a gay retort, but it did not come. Instead, Pond's face took on a look of pain that Harry had never seen it wear before.

"I wish I were, Leiter. I wish I knew how to make it so, but I fear I do not."

"I beg your pardon, old fellow," Harry cried, thrusting out his hand, "I never dreamed I could hurt you."

"Well, you see, Leiter," Pond replied, managing to get a sort of misfit smile on his face, "I have a sore spot, and it is easily hurt. I'm in love with a woman who will never love me—one I have no right to think of. It doesn't matter much, and I know it will come out all right, but it makes me feel kind of blue, sometimes."

"Yes," said Harry, with a sad little look of quizzicality, "I have heard of such things making one blue. I am a very fortunate person myself."

"I'm glad you think so," responded Pond, dryly.

"I mean in having such ready forgiveness. She forgives me fully, she says. Only fancy, she was never angry. It never occurred to her innocent heart to imagine that I could doubt her. She thought my troubles had unsettled my brain. See the pathos of it, will you! She would sooner believe that I had lost my reason, than that I could be false to my word!"

"If she leaves the city, where will she go?"

"She does not yet know. Somewhere away from all the people she knows. She says she wishes to be solitary."

"No, no! Leiter! It must not be that! Do you not see the danger of it? Oh, what shall we do with her? Where can we put her and be sure that she is safe?"

"I shall go mad some day," moaned Harry, sitting down weakly in a chair, and leaning his head against the wall. "So terrible is the thing you told me the other day, that my understanding actually refuses to accept it. I remember what you said, but I can not grasp the fact of it. Your words have brought it all back to me. Can you tell me what to do? I am like a child in the dark."

"Leave it to me, old fellow. I swear that I will do all that you could do if you were free. An idea has come into my head now. By Jove! now that I come to think of it, it is an idea indeed, and one that will set all our doubts at rest. I am going. I will tell you all another time. Now I must reach Miss Barthwait before it is too late." So Harry was left to pace the floor for another day.

Two days latter those inquisitive souls, who are in the habit of studying windows as they pass, noticed that several of the pleasantest windows in Judge Barthwait's house were dismantled. Only the gray linen shades remained in the place of the bright draperies they had been used to seeing, and

the window boxes had been quite removed. The explanation was that Margaret had gone from home for several weeks and had taken her little damsel with her. To all inquiries about his daughter the judge replied:

"She is like her father—fond of experiments. At present she is trying the experiment of solitude. I have a shooting box out here about fifty miles. It's as neat a place for snipe and ducks as you can find in the state. I keep a man and his wife down there in the winter time to look after things, and Margaret took it into her head that she would sleep better for a change of air, and that the shooting box would be a good place to get it in. I think myself that she will get more air there than she bargained for. But she had taken a box of new books along, and has a jolly little girl with her—a sort of paid friend, you might say—and I have no doubt they will do some amateur cooking and come back with the indigestion."

"You had better take a vacation yourself and go down and see her," his friends would suggest, noticing the worn look on his face.

"Well, I'm not so enthusiastic as my daughter," the judge would reply. "She thinks the country is as beautiful in winter as in summer and professes to derive as much delight from it. I have got sadly by the sentimental age. There is a fireplace inside as big as the side of a house, and Margaret is reading Russian books, like everyone else now. Talk about going down—maybe I will, unex-

pectedly some time, unexpectedly. There are plenty of bed rooms. The one she sleeps in is a little apart from the rest. It's a snug place, and nothing can disturb her there—nothing."

Pond burst in on Harry three days after their last interview. "The good fellow here didn't want to let me in," he said, shaking his fist at the warden who had accompanied him. "He seems to think I am a dangerous fellow, and so I am not going to trouble him or you for awhile. Your friend whom you know of is all right. She is where one would least expect to find her. I had to use a good deal of influence, and of course I worked everything through you. She has her little companion with her, and though she woefully hated to deceive anyone, I got up a cock and bull story how she could help you by doing as I told her, and she is quite content."

"God bless you, old fellow; I will never forget your kindness," whispered Harry with a trembling lip.

"Dry up, can't you," snarled Pond. "I don't want any thanks. Now I have to carry out the other part of my plan, and that will take me away from my home for a time. Do not try to send me any word. Be patient, and all will come well. Your case has been set for the spring term. I saw your attorney yesterday, and he said he would be around again to-day. I can't say, Leiter, that I take to that gentleman very well."

"He's the most successful criminal lawyer in the city," replied Harry, "I am not going to be able to

make out much of a case, for reasons that must be obvious to you."

"Don't be discouraged, old man. Your life is in your own hands."

"Great God, man! Don't you see that is the worst feature of it? I tell you I will never be cleared at the expense of—"

"But," argued Pond, "do you not see—"

"I see nothing but the old way. I know what my poor uncle would have me do if he were alive."

"You are an obstinate fellow, but I have a great confidence in the kindly dispositions of fate. I feel that all must come right."

"Yes, but if it does, through what sorrow and shame and horror it must come!"

Pond made no reply. He shook his friend's hand and went out.

* * * * * * * *

West Walnut street is a dingy place. The houses have a peculiarity of seeming to be always unpainted. In summer the shade from the dusty trees darkens the windows, and in winter a continual gloom is there. The light enters them only by the dingy kitchen windows or by the over-curtained front ones. It would be unsafe to say that there are more children in Walnut street than any other part of the city, but certainly no other portion has more. It is wonderful to see what a quantity of candy these children eat, or the number of pop-corn balls they make way with. These little ones are not without finery; indeed, they wear

more ribbons than the young ones of far more aristocratic districts. Yet it is not to be imagined that Walnut street is without pride. It is counted a desirable place, and there are many who look up to it as the goal of ambition. The dwellers have many tastes in common. They have, for instance, a fondness for plush albums and ribbon decorated wicker chairs. They affect white "lace" curtains, and they have a passion for the circus and the great national game.

They are not without their sociabilities, and occasionally entertain each other with "high-five," bad salads, and chocolate, served with Japanese napkins. A dressmaker is not looked down on in this district, and a bookkeeper is as good as the best.

When the snow, dirty with much lingering, lies in the tiny door-yards, and the leafless trees of a dull March sway before the widows, and the base burners in the front rooms are red with the exertions attendant upon a severe winter, Walnut street is at its worst. The young women who entered it on such a morning thought it very desolate indeed.

These young women were in a cab, and on the top of that vehicle were two very large valises. In their arms they carried some very large flower-pots, and they were laughing a good deal, although it was evident from the eyes that they had been crying also. They were looking for a furnished front room, and they had remarkably little difficulty in finding one.

It was a dull piace. On the floor was a dun-

brown carpet, which may have been dirty or may not, but was always destined to look so. Brown paper shades were at the window, and furnished a ghastly contrast to the walls, which were white. A folding bed offered its doubtful comforts. Two rockers, with a tendency to tip forward, a folding chair covered with Brussels carpeting of an uncompromising green. A washstand and a bare dresser with drawers, that hesitated and hitched in their incomings and outgoings, made up the rest. Once inside, with the cabby paid and the door closed on the landlady, the two young women sat down and laughed at each other. Then the older one justified the redness about her eyes and burst into tears.

The next day a specimen of amateur pen printing decorated the window of their room. It informed the public that the Misses Browne were fashionable dressmakers, and that they made infants' wardrobes a specialty. A sewing machine, delivered in the course of the afternoon, apprised the ladies looking out of the front windows at their new arrivals that the Misses Browne were ready for work. No one ventured to call for two or three days after that, but when they did they met an astonishing sight. The room they entered was charming, and no one, least of all the landlady, could understand how it had been done so quietly and so quickly. A cretonne of wonderful Persian design hung like a loose tapestry from numerous hooks depended from the picture molding. Above was a staining of blue. The dresser had taken to

itself a very French air with drapings of lace that did not add materially to the inaccessibility of the drawers.

The washstand was hidden behind a screen; in front of the folding bed was an easel that bore a pleasant burden and drew the attention from the giant piece of furniture behind. The shades were gone, and in their places was a delicate bit of splendor from Madras. The chairs that tilted the wrong way had been returned with thanks to the landlady, who said she was short of chairs when she gave a "progressive eucher" any way, and so was glad to get them. More luxurious ones had taken their places. On the floor was stretched a neat covering of holland, which, the young ladies pointed out to the landlady, would save the carpet. The grate was open for the first time in many years, and filled with a cheerful blaze to supplement the languid heat of the furnace. The hideous mantel was hidden with a robe of daffodil silk and some brick-a-brac. And in a conspicuous place stood the machine, while all over the strange wall covering, the spring fashion plates were pinned up, intermingled with jaunty plates from the illustrated French papers. The discovery of this room made the Misses Browne the rage.

They had offers for work immediately, and the first week they received an invitation to a "high-five." It was the highest compliment the neighborhood could pay. The Misses Browne were not so dull as to refuse. They went, and they saw and

heard some things that they did not forget for a great many years.

"You would make any exile bearable, Jeanne," said the elder that night to her little companion. "But for you I should have broken my heart. You put new life into me."

"Oh! now Miss Margaret," protested the other, running her hands through a very red crop of curls; "I haven't done a thing. You only think so. Of course, we must stand by each other, whatever comes, and above all, we must do exactly as Mr. Pond says."

"Why?" said the elder humorously.

"Because," said the other, unconscious of the fact that she was being laughed at, "I am sure he knows what is best, if anyone does."

CHAPTER XIV.

The dressmaking was the little damsel's idea, and she had three reasons for it. The first one was that, as none of their friends were to know where they were, they might become short of money; the second was that by associating with the people of their neighborhood in that close way, they could learn more about them than they possibly could in any other manner, and this the little damsel, being of an adventurous nature, valued exceedingly; and the third reason was that she thought it best Margaret should have something to keep her constantly employed.

It had taken the united eloquence of Jeanne and Pond to persuade Margaret to leave home under such peculiar circumstances, and had she been less wearied mentally, they would never have succeeded. As it was, she found a certain pleasure in yielding her will to others. The little damsel had been very determined, indeed, and for no other reason than that she desired to assist Pond and firmly believed that all the delightful young man said must be true.

At the "high-five," the Misses Browne were received with much consideration. Their severe cashmeres, elegantly made, were looked at in the light of advertisements for their trade, and Margaret's music was considered wonderful. There was a

young woman present who was introduced with the announcement that she was an actress—"the well-known actress, Miss Tessie Thompson." Margaret acknowledged her sweeping bow as she prodded her memory in vain to recall her.

"I dare say you have a stage name also, Miss Thompson," she said.

"No," returned Miss Thompson, sitting down with one foot under her, "I said when I first went on the stage that I was going to make a name—that is, you know, if I did make a name—under the right one; the one that I was born with. Ma wanted me to change, but I said: 'No, Ma, those who laugh now may not laugh so hard some time.'"

"Then you have it printed boldly on the programmes, do you?" asked Margaret.

"Well, not yet. I have never been on the programmes yet. I am in the chorus. I go on at almost all of the theatres. When anything comes here that needs a lot of people, I get in. I have never had any speaking part. Except now and then we all have to call out something, or make a murmur."

"You have a great work before you, then," said Margaret, entering into the spirit of the thing. "It is very difficult to make a murmur. I have never heard one yet that sounded at all like a crowd's murmur. Why do you not make yourself immortal, Miss Thompson, by inventing a successful murmur?"

"Well," said Miss Thompson, grinning till she showed a perfect set of good-sized teeth, "I might. I believe I will."

She raised her plump hands and carefully adjusted her yellow wig, which she wore with the most innocent candor, expecting no one to be deceived, but believing it to be a charming ornament.

The hostess was evidently proud of having such a lioness to introduce to the Misses Browne, and was quite beside herself with gratification to see them taking so kindly to each other. Much to the dismay of the little damsel, she found herself besieged by the son of the hostess. He was an over grown lad who bore the proud name of Barnum, and he seemed to take it as a very great compliment when Jeanne asked him if he was any relation to the greatest showman on earth. He insisted on fanning her, and with each motion of the fan he succeeded in hitting her somewhere, to his ever-recurring embarrassment. Margaret and Jeanne not being accomplished in the exciting game of "high-five," they had to be instructed, and so far from considering this to be a drawback to the evening's pleasure, the guests rivaled each other in their explanations of the game, and corrected each other in so many particulars that the learners concluded it must be an indefinite thing, like poetry, and as hard to define. Young Barnum refused to act as Jeanne's partner for the reason that it would interfere with his fanning; he, therefore, consented to be her opponent, and disinterestedly undertook to watch her cards and tell her how to play. Margaret had for a partner a punning young man in the undertaker business. He gave her a card

with his name, Jasper Shields, on it, and his business address. The card bore the information that the most fashionable burial outfits were kept constantly on hand.

"Do you really mean to say, Mr. Shields," said Margaret, looking at the card, "that there are fashions in burial clothes?"

Mr. Shields smiled cautiously behind his hand, as if afraid of offending the friends of the departed, and said:

"There ain't a business, Miss Browne, that has more dash and go to it than ours does. We have to be modish if anybody does. No one likes to have the corpse of any one they was fond of laid away in out-of-date things. Your play, Miss Browne; be careful now and remember what I told you about trumps. It's been a splendid winter for trade. The business was never in a more flourishing condition, and we have a man now that is a 'daisy!'"

"Yes?" faintly ejaculated Margaret. The rest were evidently used to the commercial enthusiasm of Mr. Shields.

"Yes. He can beat up as nice a class of trade as you would care to see."

"How charming," murmured Miss Thompson, putting out her foot so that every one could see her white kid slipper.

"Yes," said Shields, replying to her remark. "He don't let no one get ahead of him, that is sure. He talkes right up. We use nothing but the best linings for our coffins, and our hearse is as pretty

a wagon as you would see in a day's walk. I'd like to show it to you some day, Miss Browne."

"Thank you," said Margaret. "I hope you don't want me to ride in it, Mr. Shields?"

"Eh, no. At least—oh! now, I say, that is good! Eh? Well, well. I didn't know you made jokes, Miss Browne. I like a joke myself, especially a pun. Usually I make a good many. My friends like them very much. I may say they are a good deal laughed over, Miss Browne. But they don't seem to come as easy as usual to-night. Perhaps you don't care for puns, Miss Browne?"

Margaret protested that she did—she adored them. Mr. Shields thereupon went into a sort of clairvoyant trance, out of which he emerged after a time to say:

"Do you sing?"

"Not very much," said Margaret. "Do you?"

"Yes," sighed Shields, gratified to see that her remarks were taking the right direction. "I sing falsetto."

"How pleasant," murmured Margaret.

"Yes," went on Shields, "I never did until last week, when I went to my dentist, and he gave me a false set of teeth; that's how it come." He assumed a look of owl-like sobriety, while his friends nodded to each other as much as to say, "this was worth waiting for."

"I should *think* you would have a brisk trade, Mr. Shields," cried the little damsel, feigning not to see that Margaret was shaking her head at her.

"Yes, miss," replied Shields, not catching the bearing of the remark, "this man I have finds out that some one is ailing, and just camps before the place. He used to be in the prize ring, but he has gone to the stable now, you may say, and is not much good in that line. But he is as good a man for a spurt as there is to be found, and no one else has leave to get near a 'prospective' that he has his eye on. We have trade about all our own way here. Besides, there's the churches. I realized from the start that it was a great thing to get the friendship of the churches. So I up and joined the Baptist Church and my assistant joined the Methodist, and the brethren stand by us."

About this time refreshments were brought in, and Miss Thompson sat down near Margaret to eat her shrimp salad. She engaged the young dressmaker for a certain abbreviated costume that she was soon to need, and which Margaret calculated could be made out of three yards of cloth and a little ribbon. That closed the evenings' entertainment, for the guests had to be up early in the morning and could not stand late hours. Mr. Shields and Mr. Barnum begged that they might have the honor of walking home with the young ladies, and were unable to conceal their astonishment when the Misses Browne protested that the distance was so short that they really preferred to go alone and not trouble anyone. The hostess insisted that her son would be delighted, but the Misses Browne were firm. Young Barnum found an opportunity to

whisper, as Jeanne was putting on her cloak: "I hope you ain't got anything against me, Miss Browne, that you don't want me to go home with you?"

"Goodness gracious, no," responded Jeanne warmly. "How could I have?"

"Well," said the strapping young fellow, raising his shoulders, "girls are queer sometimes. If you ain't opposed to me in no way, Miss Browne, perhaps you would be good enough to go to the museum with me to-morrow—to see the two-headed girl, you know. A lot of us is going. It's a perfectly respectable place, you know."

"Well, you see, Mr. Barnum," said Jeanne looking as demure as possible, "sister and I are not—not going out anywhere. But I thank you just as much."

"Well, now," said the young giant, flushing scarlet, "I call that a burning shame. Ma said to me only to-night, 'There's two young ladies, Tom, that I would like to see you keep company with in a genteel, friendly way, Tom,' says she. And now you say you don't mean to keep no company. I believe it's a dislike you have taken to me."

"Oh! believe me," cried Jeanne earnestly, "it is not. I should be glad to have you call with your mother. We would like to see you."

"Call with my mother!" burst out Barnum, in a very indiscreet tone of voice, "well, say, I don't have to take my mother around with me. I know how to get along without her, I should hope. I'm much obliged to you, but I don't think I will call.

I don't look very good, I suppose, but you're the first girl that was ever afraid to have me call on her."

"Oh! Mr. Barnum," protested Jeanne with tears in her eyes, "I cannot tell you how you make me feel! You do not understand at all. Tell your mother about it. She will explain. You see, it is not as if we were at home with friends."

"That's all right," replied Barnum, tossing his head with it's mop of hair. "I guess I know when I've got the mitten without asking ma. I'm not the man to trouble you."

And as Margaret spoke her thanks to her hostess for her hospitality and bowed herself out, drawing Jeanne with her, the offended giant still stood sulking in the hall.

Thus did life go on with Margaret and her friend. Their little room got to be a popular meeting place in the evening for some of the neighbors. The young giant never came, but he used to promenade up and down in front of the house with the ever-smiling Miss Thompson. It was evident that he wished to excite bitter regret in the breast of the haughty Miss Browne.

* * * * *

The rabbit, leaping noiselessly through the Tillingham marshes, was startled one morning by seeing a young man approach through the narrow path that pierced the undergrowth. He walked as if he enjoyed the solitude as much as did the

rabbit. Swinging up one arm, he shook a shower of snow from one of the branches of a homely white oak, that stood surrounded by a group of aspens, so slim and delicate that they reminded one of a band of young maidens beside the masculine oak. Once he stooped, and bringing up a handful of snow, put it to his lips. When his eye fell on the rabbit, who stood poised ready for flight, he sent out a cheerful shout that even the rabbit must have felt had more of greeting than of defiance in it.

In the midst of the marsh stood a long, red house of wood—a typical shooting box. To this the young man directed his steps. It is true that the man and woman who sat in the smoky kitchen protested that they were not at liberty to take any boarders, and that the proprietor would be exceedingly vexed if he knew of their doing so. But the inducement offered by their visitor was too great for them to refuse. He was worn out, he said, and on the verge of nervous prostration. The doctor said he must have quiet. The couple who kept guard of the place were not altogether averse to having someone to share their solitude, especially when they observed that the stranger carried a violin case, and they finally gave their consent.

The young man was given the best bed-room. The house was principally composed of bedrooms, but this stood apart from the rest, beyond the general hall. This hall was an inviting apartment. A fireplace made one end of it, and before

it were great rush chairs, calculated to invite the tired hunter after a day's work. Skins and fowling pieces hung upon the walls and a huge leather sofa was placed opposite the fireplace. The young man settled down to his solitude with perfect contentment. He slept most of the morning, played on his violin, and read old papers in the afternoon, told stories to his companions in the evening—and then retired. The good woman would have been better pleased if he had been an early riser, but he was too generous a boarder to complain about, and besides, she really found him a charming young man.

One night the young man had retired to his room early, as usual. The good people of the house sprinkled ashes over the fire, saw to the winding of the clock, and went to their room at the rear of the house. The young man, left to himself, opened the door of his room into the hall, brushed off the ashes from the fire so that it would continue to burn, and blowing out the light, placed himself in an easy chair and laid a small revolver on a deal table at his right. As the hours passed, he did not move from his seat, but kept his eyes fixed on the window.

"It occurs to me," he said once to himself, almost audibly, "that I may be making a great fool of myself. I haven't over-much faith in my judgment, and I must hope that I have been mistaken. And yet it will be exceedingly mortifying to go back and—my God, it has come!"

There was certainly a slight noise at the window, if that was what he meant. But there was surely

nothing in so slight a noise to make a person tremble and grasp the revolver and breathe a prayer. It was surely an arrant coward that would be so affected. The eyes fastened on the window saw the sash move up slowly—slowly, and the leg of a man put in. Pond sat motionless. The man coming in from the snow, which even at night gave out a sort of luminosity, could not see so well as Pond, whose eyes had become accustomed to the dark. The man entered the room by slow degrees. Once inside, he made a noiseless rush for the bed. Pond could hear him making inarticulate exclamations as he felt about the empty cot. Then suddenly Pond struck a match, or attempted to strike one. It was one of the explosive "parlor matches," and it emitted a shower of tiny sparks, made a startling noise and refused to go off. It did not show Pond the face of the man, although he thought he saw a pair of hot, mad eyes gleaming at him; but it revealed Pond to the intruder. He gave one angry sob, and before Pond could move, had burst through the window, carrying the sash with him.

The rest of the night Pond paced the floor. He astonished his hostess by appearing early at breakfast. His belongings were packed, he said, and he had determined to return to the city that day. He was anxious to catch the first train in.

As he took his seat in the car and purchased a morning paper, he was not astonished to see reflected in the mirror opposite him, the face that he had expected to see when he tried to light that match the night before.

CHAPTER XV.

Pond made his way one afternoon soon after his return to the city, to the house on Walnut street. He stopped before the place long enough to raise his eye-glass and regard the dressmaker's sign with a grin. The officious landlady showed him up the stairs and left him reluctantly at the door of her boarder's room. He knocked once—waited—knocked again—listened—and at last heard a small voice bidding him enter. Slowly opening the door, he caught a glimpse of a small figure, topped with red, sitting in the sleepy-hollow chair, rubbing her eyes.

It was evident that the princess of the enchanted palace had been sleeping. The minute the eye of the princess fell on her visitor, she gave a horrified little scream, put her hands hurriedly to her skirts to be sure that they were not indecorously awry, and turned a beautiful scarlet.

"I have never done anything in my life but make blunders," protested Pond, with fluency that the little damsel found so captivating. Jeanne tried to stammer out a reply. She held out her hand tremulously, essayed to say a dozen different things, failed in all, met Pond's quizzical glance, and covered her face with her hands.

"Am I an orge, Miss Whitfield? Do you want me to go away?"

The question brought Jeanne to her senses. She

grew demure and selfpossessed out of sheer alarm.

"Did you ever see such a foolish girl, Mr. Pond? Sit down, do. She will be home in a little while. You must wait for her."

"Wait for whom?" asked Pond with fell intent, having an inner consciousness that the question would flatter her.

"Why, for Miss Margaret, of course. You came to see her, I suppose?"

"Well," said Pond, "I suppose I did, if you say so. I know when I have received a hint as well as the next man, and if you say I came to see Miss Margaret, I suppose I am to understand that you wish me to confine my attentions to her?"

"Of course," snapped Jeanne, getting up and going for the door. "And since you came only to see her, I may as well give you the morning papers and leave you till she returns. Then I shall be very happy to tell her you are here."

"Thank you," retorted, Pond solemnly; "so good of you, I am sure. But I have a few questions I would like to ask you."

"Oh, if I can be of any use—" sighed Jeanne, sitting down again.

"You are always of use Miss Whitfield."

Jeanne sniffed.

"Are you happy here?" asked Pond after a moment's pause.

"Certainly," said Jeanne coldly. "We find the place very funny."

"Funny? Yes, the neighborhood looks hilarious,

and I always thought dressmaking must be one of the most humorous of things."

"Oh, we are in society," explained Jeanne maliciously. "There are parties, and we are invited. We meet young men."

"You do, do you?" said Pond, unbuttoning his overcoat.

"Yes. They ask us to go to the museum—the dime museum. The people here go in parties."

"Great heavens! And do you go? Does Miss Barthwait go? Who are the young men?"

"I don't know who they are," murmured Jeanne, smilingly. "Oh! yes; one is an undertaker. He says he is engaged in beating up business. But he pays no attention to me. He looks after Miss Margaret."

"By Jove!" cried Pond.

"Yes," said Jeanne. She got up and put some fresh perfumery on her handkerchief. "I don't know what Mr. Barnum does. He is the one that asks me to the dime museum. You might think he was connected with it from the name; but he is not."

"No?" ejaculated Pond, white about the mouth.

"No. And such a good name for a museum, too, don't you think? He has hair like mine."

"A bond of sympathy, I suppose?" sneered her guest.

"Well, yes, if you look at it so."

"Oh! I look at it so," cried Pond. "How many times have you been to the museum?"

"Well, of course one wouldn't care to see the same attractions twice. One visit is enough for the big-footed girl, though it might do to put two—that is, to devote two, to the dog-faced boy. By the way, they let any one take the snakes that wants to"—this in a charming burst of confidence.

"Where is Miss Barthwait?" said Pond severely, rising. "If you can tell me, I think I will go to meet her."

"Haven't any idea where she is. She goes out walking every day."

"With the undertaker?"

"Oh, my! no. He's at his place through the day. It would never do for him to neglect his business."

Pond murmured something about being willing to give his assistants some work. Jeanne smiled more charmingly than ever.

"Sit down awhile," she pleaded, "I want to tell you some more."

"No, I thank you," said Pond, decidedly. "I have heard enough."

"A little seems to satisfy you, doesn't it? How nice. I think a contented spirit is one of the greatest things on earth, don't you, Mr. Pond?"

At this remark the young man turned suddenly, as if struck by an idea. Then he marched up to where the young lady sat swinging her little feet. They were incased in slippers of the most uncompromising red, and her short dress betrayed the red clockings on her black stockings. Pond was not

interested in her slippers, however. He was concerned with her eyes.

"I wan't to know," he cried, shaking one gloved fist in her radiant face, "if you are the most consummate—romancer on earth? If you are, you deserve to be shaken till you can't see."

"Well," returned Jeanne, lifting her blue eyes to his, "I do as well as I can, with my natural advantages. Of course, I am no Rider Haggard."

"But," cried Pond, sitting down again, this time with his overcoat off, "why do you do it?"

"Now see here," said Jeanne, putting her fingers together in what might be termed an argumentative position, "a young man we do not know at all, at all, comes to us and says: 'Go away from home. No matter why. I say go. Do not tell any one where you are going. Keep as quiet as the grave and all will be well. Why? Because I say so.' Then you go, and like an idiot do all that young man says. And every time you think of it you get vexed, and the more you think about it the worse you get. Then that young man appears, and you are outraged to find that you are not so angry with him as you thought you were, you feel that you must take it out of him some way, and you do. That is all-"

"That is all, is it?" repeated Pond, looking at her with wide-stretched eyes. "Now you put it that way, I must say that your faith in me does seem a tremendous compliment to pay to a stranger. I thank you very much. How does Miss Barthwait feel about it?"

"It isn't easy to tell what Miss Barthwait thinks about anything. She doesn't talk as much as most women. But she doesn't eat much now, and I know she doesn't sleep well nights. When morning comes she is cheerful, though, and is always finding something to laugh about."

"Bless her brave heart," murmured the young man, with moist eyes.

"She works very hard," went on the girl. "You would think to watch her that she actually had to make her own living. She makes beautiful dresses, and the people round here think there was never such a woman. Sometimes I can see that she would rather be alone for a while, and then I say I think I would rather not go out walking. She would never go without asking me, you know."

"Poor girl," sighed Pond, "I wonder how she bears her trouble as well as she does!"

"It's a great deal harder for her, now that she is away from her father," said Jeanne. "Don't you think she might go back now?"

"Great God, no!" burst out Pond. "I tell you she must be kept here. Do you imagine I was romancing when I said that a great danger threatened her? I tell you, if she had not followed my advice and come here, she would have been dead now. I know what I am talking about, Miss Whitfield."

"Oh!" cried Jeanne, shuddering and growing white, "I cannot make it all out. I never heard of such dreadful things as you talk about, Mr. Pond.

Are you sure you do not imagine them? The world has always seemed such a pleasent place to me! I cannot realize the awful things you tell about."

A vision of that dark form, mumbling and feeling over the bed in the night came back to Pond. Could he tell her the truth, or any part of it? He looked at her. She was so happy, so innocent, so fresh. She made him think of a morning flower, on which the dew still lingered. No, he could not tell her. Before he could think of anything that would appease her curiosity, and yet spare her the terrible revelation, Margaret entered. She looked pale, but she had a smile ready to greet Pond with.

"Do you come from Harry?" she asked.

"Not immediately. Yet I have seen him lately. He is well, Miss Barthwait, and in no worse spirits than any man must be under his circumstances. I wish myself that he would consent to see you. I think you could help him, though you only stayed a moment. But he will not hear of having you come there, and I know we would both incur his anger if you were to go."

Margaret sat down and slowly drew off her gloves. Her face seemed to have lenghtened the last few months, and to have matured. The girlish look had left it, not to return.

"It is a sad old world," she said abstractedly. She was thinking of Harry.

"Well, you know, it's only sad in streaks," replied Pond, cheerily.

"Harry writes that you are like sunshine to him,"

she said, smiling again. "I wonder if you know how grateful I shall be all my life for your goodness."

"Please do not!" cried Pond, with a real accent of distress.

"Oh! you will have to be thanked occasionally, however painful it may be to you. That is the penalty you must pay for being kind."

"You know it will not be long before the case, now, Miss Barthwait?"

"I know it. What will the outcome be? That is what I ask myself a thousand times a day. Yet I can never admit the terrible possibility of conviction. I cannot make it seem possible that this could happen."

"Do not try to make it seem possible. I hope it will never be. Miss Barthwait, if Harry could be saved by throwing the burden of the guilt where it belongs, and if it belonged to a once-loved friend, what would you have him do?"

"I could not possibly answer that question at random, Mr. Pond. But I think the guilt should be placed where it belongs. Yet, if you will not think me foolish, I would like to tell you of a strange feeling I have had of late. I do not know how to describe it. But I shrink from having anything more to do with the matter. Something tells me to leave it all to time; that I will bitterly regret it if I try to aid in the detection of the real criminal. At night, when I sleep, I fall a dreaming of it, and a warning voice continually tells me to

have nothing to do with the matter. I seem selfish and indifferent. Yet I am not so."

"Do you need to tell us that, Miss Barthwait? Do you know what I would advise? Follow your instincts. Harry will be cleared, I trust, without your aid. Pray for him, and for yourself, but do nothing else. Best follow your instincts, believe me."

He arose to go, as if he had found the interview difficult. And, indeed, her sadness and beauty so surrounded him, so enrapt him, that he felt as if he were under a spell. Must he always have that deep sinking of the heart, the yearning pain, when he met her?

"Take Jeanne out with you," suggested Margaret, rising too. "She has been in all day, and she finds me a dull companion. Put on your things, Jeanne, and walk a few blocks with Mr. Pond to talk to. I am sure he will be good-natured enough."

"I will be selfish enough," returned Pond.

"Come Miss Whitfield, and we will visit a confectionery store."

"Do you really mean it?" cried Jeanne. "And can I pick out my own candy? You know I don't eat ices."

Margaret whispered something to Jeanne as they went out, and once on the street, Jeanne confided that they were to get a bunch of English violets to send to Harry.

"We will do that first,' remarked the little damsel, "and then we need not hurry when we get to the confectioner's shop."

"I can see well enough that I have run my head into a noose," remarked Pond mournfully. "In short, I am lost."

"Well, it's a fact," said Jeanne twirling her angora muff, "that I have a tremendous appetite for chocolate creams."

But some way they did not talk much after all. The little damsel constantly fell behind and got out of step. She said she wasn't used to walking with gentlemen. Pond smiled disbelievingly. But those efforts were spasmodic. They were both full of the sad girl they had left, and try as they would, it was impossible to get her out of their hearts. They got the violets, but at the last Jeanne refused to go to the confectionery store. Pond took a car and she walked back alone.

"What a shame," sighed Pond to himself, as he puffed the smoke from his cigar into the gray air, "that I cannot fall in love with the little girl. She is as pretty as a flower and as amusing as a tame squirrel. What a pity that I cannot love her."

CHAPTER XVI.

The little damsel was out a few mornings after this, buying some embroidery for one of the "infants' wardrobes." She flitted about among the laces and embroideries of the luxurious shop like a butterfly over a field of clover. She would not buy too rashly, and it would never do to miss the chance of getting something prettier than she was looking at. Consequently, purchasing was a laborious process, and it was high noon when she emerged, hungry, exhausted but thoroughly gratified, as are all good women when they have finished a successful shopping tour. Suddenly Jeanne was startled out of this happy frame of mind. Before her stood the judge.

Poor Jeanne colored a painful red under the stern scrutiny of his eyes.

"Where is my daughter?" asked the judge. Jeanne gave a shuddering glance at him. Did he know they had not been at the marshes? How much should she tell, and how much conceal? What if she should be stupid and say something that would make Margaret—or worse still, Dennis Pond—angry with her.

The judge read her thoughts.

"I know very well that neither of you have been to the marshes," he said. "Where is my daughter?"

"In the city," said poor Jeanne, feeling that her absent friends would expect her to be secret, and yet sympathizing with the man who stood frowning at her.

"Miss Whitfield," said the judge, taking hold of her arm with a firm, yet gentle grasp, "I must know where my daughter is at once, and if you do not tell me, you must suffer the consequences."

"What will they be?" asked Jeanne, wanting to cry, and feeling that she was wrong and the judge right, and yet afraid of the verdict of her friends.

"I am sorry to have to say it, but if you do not immediately tell me where Margaret is, I shall call a police wagon and have you taken in it through these open streets to the station."

Jeanne drew herself away from him and looked up with the trembling quite gone, and a quiet dignity in her eyes.

"I dislike telling you very much now," she said, "because you will think that I did it from cowardice. But I will tell you. I beleive you are right and ought to know, but I wish before I tell you that you will promise not to blame her. Will you promise, sir?"

"I shall be too glad to get her back, safe and well, to chide her very much, though she has caused me terrible suffering," he said, with his voice breaking a little.

"Well," murmured Jeanne softly, "I am sure you must have felt dreadful! I have been sorry for you all the time, and so, I know, has Miss Margaret,

and I'm afraid you'll find it hard to understand what made us do the way we have. Yet I assure you we had the most particular reason. But if you have time, and will come with me now, we will go to her."

A cab was called and the judge bade Jeanne enter it. The poor girl did so with many secret misgivings. Her poor little heart was fluttering so that she could hardly conceal it. But once inside, the mood of her companionseemed to change. His sternness vanished and he assumed a phase of character that puzzled Jeanne. Had she searched for a word to describe it, she would have chosen timidity.

"Can you give me no hint of what made Margaret leave me?" he asked, bending over to look in Jeanne's distressed face. "Is she angry with me because I cannot sympathize with her belief in the innocence of Mr. Leiter?"

"Why, of course she minds that a great deal," truthfully replied the frightened girl. "It is a hard position for her to be placed in. She wants to be true to both of you, and, under the circumstances, that is hard to do. But that was not the reason, no."

Looking up just then, Jeanne saw that the face of the judge had grown very white indeed; and in his eyes was a glassy look, such as she had seen in her little brother's face when a snake twined around his bare leg.

"Why in God's name did she do it, then?" he

said, so low that Jeanne could barely catch the words above the rattle of the cab. "It was not that she was afraid of something?"

"Why," assented Jeanne, shrinking into the far corner of the seat, "I think she was afraid—a little."

"Of what, child? Of what could she be afraid in her father's house?"

"That is what I do not know," whispered the little damsel, with cold lips. "And I do not think she exactly knew either."

"But why," went on the judge in the same strained voice, and with the same terrible gaze, "why did she say she was going one place, and then go another? Why did she conceal her abiding place from me, of all persons in the world?"

"That," said Jeanne, answering with brevity born of the moment, "I cannot tell. We acted under advice."

"No!" cried the judge, sitting upright and gazing at the girl with hot eyes, "do not tell me that! No one told her—she is not listening to"—he stopped suddenly. His face took to itself a look of alarm, different in its quality from that which had distorted it a moment before. When he spoke again, his voice had returned to its natural tone, except that it was full of sadness.

"You do not suppose that she had forsaken her father for others, do you?" he asked piteously. "She is all I have in the world. You do not think that she has ceased to love me, do you?"

"Oh, no, no!" cried Jeanne, taking one of his

hands in hers with a rush of daughterly pity. "You would never think so if you could see how she has mourned for you every night since we have been away, and heard how often she has asked me if I thought she was doing very wrong."

"But I cannot understand," pleaded the judge, "try hard as I can, I am not able to understand why, if she loves and trusts me still, she should have wished to keep her place of living concealed from me."

"Well," said Jeanne, leaning forward confidently, "it is a mysterious thing, and Miss Margaret and I cannot make it out at all, though we have talked and talked about it."

"What is a mysterious thing?" inquired the judge.

"Why, the reason that we ought to leave the house. We could not understand, ourselves, but we were almost made to go. I really ought not to tell you so much. I fear I have got Miss Margaret in a great deal of trouble. And, oh! you will explain to her, will you not, so that she will not be offended with me? I could not stand it to have her vexed."

"You are a good little girl," said the judge, pressing the very small hand that lay in his, "and I am sure no one, least of all Margaret, could be vexed with you."

Well might the judge look in astonishment at the dark little house, and the sign of the Misses Browne; well might he wonder at the sight of Margaret, pinning a sleeve to the arm of a corpulent lady who had come to the dressmaking parlors with the intelligence that she must be made to look thin.

Margaret looked up from her task to meet the troubled eyes of her father. In that gaze was a world of reproach to her heart. With a word of apology to her patron, she bounded into the hall, shut the door, and laid her head against that of her father—a place where it had laid in peace and comfort so many hundred times. There is something about this contact of a familiar face that brings with it the most consummate peace that the world can offer. Margaret's slow tears fall on her father's shoulder, while he trembled with the joy of having her safe in his arms again. No questions were asked then, no excuses made. Both felt that it was enough for the moment that they were together once more. Margaret had to go back to the corpulent lady and finish the sleeve. It took but a moment, and with a parting injunction that she wished her arm to look slender, the visitor took her 280 pounds out of the room. Jeanne sat in a corner, where she could see Margaret, and made mysterious signs, which interpreted meant: Should she go, or should she stay? Had she done wrong, or right? If wrong, would she be forgiven? To these questions she received answers also in the silent language that women understand so well. She was to stay; she had done right, and if she had done wrong she would have been forgiven. Margaret wanted the support of her little friend's presence. She hoped that she might catch inspiration for her answers from her quicker wit. Never before had their flight appeared to her in such a bad light. She had been

at once absurd and cruel, and the meek way in which she had taken the advice of another was preposterous. To think that she should have deceived her father on the word of a man whom she had not seen a dozen times! She grew scarlet with shame as she thought of it.

But the very thing happened that she least expected—an incredible thing. The judge asked only that they would return to his home!

Not an inquiry did he make, nor a reproach. It was unbelievable, and yet not so unbelievable as what followed. For the judge put his face in his hands and thought awhile, while the two girls exchanged mystified glances. Then he said that perhaps under the circumstances, it would be as well for them to remain where they were for a time. The trial would soon be on, and Margaret might find it pleasanter to be where no one would know of her identity.

Margaret and Jeanne could do nothing but stare. Suddenly a terrible suspicion seized Margaret.

"Of course, papa," she whispered, going up to him and laying one hand softly on his cheek, "you are not displeased with me? This is not a way of saying that you do not want me to come home any more?"

"Bless you, no!" cried the judge, with one of his old-time accents of candor. "Come back to-morrow, to-day, whenever you will, and never leave it or me! Do you think I would let my little daughter go out of my life because she took it into her head to

be a bit adventuresome and eccentric? I was up to all sorts of tricks when I was young, and I suppose girls are not materially different from boys. No, I mean what I say. Stay here till the trial is over. Here you have plenty of work and new scenes to keep you occupied. I like your pluck. Stay if you like, daughter."

And still no questions, no expression of astonishment, of distress! He seemed to feel no astonishment that she, a lady by birth and habit, should play at dressmaking in a shabby genteel neighborhood. He actually passed over what must have seemed to him the most unaccountable freak, without comment! Margaret, by a strange perversity, was almost hurt. She would rather have been censured.

In a little while he even rose to go. But first he held Margaret in his arms for a little while, and stroked her hair, and talked to her softly, as he had been in the habit of doing for nineteen years. Then he kissed her, told the little damsel to keep a careful eye on his girl, and let no harm come to her, and putting a roll of bills on the table, departed. The girls never moved from the positions he left them in, till they heard the front door close, and then the gate.

"Well!" said Margaret.

"I should say so;" assented Jeanne, "but at least we can get out the sewing we have in now. I was afraid for a time that our professional reputations would suffer." And she sat down to work on the infants' wardrobe.

That afternoon Pond came in, looking especially elegant in a new spring overcoat, which Jeanne insisted that he had paid too much for, to his hardly concealed annoyance. Was he always to be made ridiculous before Margaret?

When he heard of the morning's incident, he sprang to his feet with a startled face.

"Then you must find a new place to-morrow," he cried.

"No, we must not," said Margaret quietly. "I have had enough of running away from my father. There is to be no more of it, Mr. Pond, even to please so valuable a friend as yourself—no," anticipating his next remark, "not even to please Harry."

"How did your father find out that you were not at the marshes?" inquired Pond.

"Oddly enough," exclaimed Margaret, "I did not think to ask him."

"Where has he been conducting his searches for you? I wonder if he informed the police of your disappearance?"

"I don't suppose he did, or he would have spoken of it."

"How long do you think he has known it?"

"I did not ask. You must think I was stupid, and I was. I sat numb with astonishment that he did not reproach me."

"Why do you think he refrained? Did he have no curiosity concerning your motive?"

"Well, to tell the truth, I thought he might have some idea of the reason I left—which is more than

I have—and so he avoided the subject. He always had spared me as much as he could."

"You positively refuse to move, Miss Barthwait?"

"Positively, Mr. Pond."

"Very well, I have much business to-day, Miss Barthwait, and must hasten." He made his adieus, and Jeanne accompanied him to the door.

"It really cost you more than it ought," she said by way of good bye, giving a hasty pat to the coat.

"What a torment she is," Pond remarked to the next lamp post. "No man could love her more than an hour at a time."

That night he who made his way along Walnut street might have noticed two men pacing around and around the block where the Misses Browne had hung out their sign. These men wore the clothes of citizens, but concealed under their coats were dark-lanterns, and on the lapels of their inner coats were detectives' stars.

CHAPTER XVII.

Days evil and days good pass with equal rapidity. The trial was half through. Twelve hours to a day of dread and twelve to a night of wakefulness—only twelve. Margaret could hardly believe that they held no more.

She did not see her father, but she heard of all he did and said through the papers. Pond called for a moment almost every evening. Harry seemed to have lost all his melancholy, and the jaunty spirit of happier days had returned to him.

"It is all over," he said to Pond. "I have fought the fight with myself. I will die. It will be easier for her that way than the other. In a little while—women's wounds must heal, Pond. But I know she loves me now. Balzac says somewhere: 'To a wounded heart, silence and shadow.' Well, I talk and I rejoice in you, and all other pleasant things, because I have not a wounded heart."

"You are acting like a fool," Pond would cry angrily. "Worse, you are committing a crime."

"I am only sinning against myself," Harry would protest.

"That is not true, sir. You are going to kill her, I tell you. Worse, you are going to leave a ravening monster free to work his hellish—"

"Now, don't, Pond," Harry would interrupt, with

a little affectation of weariness. "Whatever you do, Dennis, don't be melo-dramatic."

"Could I have better excuse?" Pond would cry.

"There is no excuse, my dear boy. To be a perfect gentleman, it is necessary to yawn and look bored even on your own scaffold."

He used this tone of persiflage always now. Nothing could make him serious. In the odd moments he wrote verses to Margaret. For the most part, they were merely love ballads, and they were never apropos to the situation of Harry and his poor little sweetheart. They were evidently written simply for love of writing, and of Margaret. The morning of the day that the closing speech of the prosecution came, Margaret received the following unrhymed verses, written on odd bits of envelope and paper:

ROSE OR THORN.

Is love a rose, or is it but a thorn?
A thorn a day ago, a rose to-day;
Last week the sweetest flower that ever bloomed,
Last night the sharpest thorn that ever pricked—
Is love a rose, or is it but a thorn?

Is love a rose? Roses are ever sweet.
Yet stinging bitterness love oft doth bring,
The rose's crimson cheel is soft and fair,
Love's cheeks so often haggard, wan and worn.
Is love a rose? Roses are ever sweet.

Is love a thorn? Thorns give us naught but pain,
Whilst love gives pleasure and a glad delight.
Thorns wound—their only purpose is to wound;
Love's wounds are given oft for love's sweet sake.
Is love a thorn? Thorns give us naught but pain.

Or rose or thorn, what matters it, my sweet?
He knows not pleasure who hath not known pain.
If love's a rose I'll drink its fragrant breath;
If love's a thorn, I'll sheath it in my heart.
Or rose or thorn, what matters it, my sweet?

True love hath still the rose's virgin hue,
True love hath still the prickling pangs of pain;
We weary of the sky that's ever blue,
We weary of the river always smooth—
True love hath still the rose's virgin hue.

Is love a rose, or is it but a thorn?
When you are with me, dear, it is a rose,
Whose beauty is a perfumed dream of bliss;
When you are gone, heart's joy, I feel the thorn.
Is love a rose, or is it but a thorn?

Love unreturned must ever be a thorn;
Love that is only words—a scentless rose.
Pluck out the thorn and cast it in the dust,
Or wear the rose and make believe 'tis sweet?
Love unreturned must ever be a thorn.

And the man who wrote this was on trial for his life! The deep windows of the court room admitted but little light, and the flaring gas jets seemed to accent rather than lighten the gloom. The court room was crowded. The aisles between the seats, and the margin of space about the wall, was filled with a swaying mass of humanity.

Harry had entered court with what looked to be an almost eager air. It was but his natural manner, but this the lookers-on did not know, and they jumped at the conclusion that his acquittal must be near and certain. His cheeks were carefully shaven, his brown mustache correctly trimmed.

His abundant brown hair combed up from his brow after the fashion of the day. A suit of dark gray diagonal, with a coat of rather severe cut, gave him an air of freshness that most men sacrifice to the doleful black which convention dictates. The shining linen, the hat carried with a certain grace, the keen eyes, in which a glint of humor lay, the pose of the head that was so characteristic, all combined to give him the appearance of a man who was about to pass a pleasant day.

Judge Barthwait felt his terrible position; that was painfully evident from his face. He was about to try for murder the nephew of his dearest friend. If that dead friend had had warning of his death, he would have placed the beloved lad in the hands of the man who might now be obliged to pronounce the death penalty upon him. Was it any wonder that he turned a slow and fearful gaze upon him as he entered the court-room, or that he shuddered to see him so free of glance, so self-assured, so intrepid? Was it any wonder that as the evidence drew near its end, and all the damning facts stood arrayed before the judge and before those twelve solemn men, that once something like a sob shook the form of the poor old man? Who could be surprised to see him drop his head in his hands, as if the throbbing was more than he could stand? Who could demur at the lack of judicial dignity that made him groan aloud, and look at Harry with infinite pity?

That Harry saw and felt it was evident from the

glances he returned. He seemed to be sending messages of courage from his splendid eyes. Two or three times it seemed as if his lips were making the motion of words intended for the judge.

"Do not fear," they appeared to say. "All will be well. Do not fear. Remember Margaret."

At noon of that long, long day, two young women pushed their way in at the door leading from the ante-room. The sheriff was with them and found them seats, where they would be screened from the crowd. Both of them were veiled, but from under the hat of one appeared a knot of brown hair, with glints of gold in it; from beneath the hat of the other protruded a mop of brilliant curls. On the breast of the taller one was a bunch of English violets. Their tender perfume sent its sweet message all over the room.

The scent crept to Harry's nostrils. His eyes sought the source of that perfume, and found the violets. Then his heart gave a leap of mingled pain and love. The message the violets brought to him was:

"They signify thoughts. She is thinking of me with love and tenderness. Can I do less than die for her peace?"

"There may be as much courage displayed in enduring with resignation the sufferings of the soul, as in remaining firm under the showers of shot from a battery," said Napoleon the First. Harry stood now under belching fire, but he did not flinch. And yet there was his love—his love!

Roger Brisbane thought best to make his defense brief. He dwelt upon the love known to exist between the dead man and the prisoner. He made a point of perfect sanity that all agreed belonged to Harry Leiter. He spoke of his known disregard for money, and added to this, the statement that he could at any time have had all he desired. Mercenary motives had never been attributed to him, even in the slightest extent. Would such a man murder his benefactor and kinsman for money which he could have at any time, and for which he did not care? He emphasized the manner in which Harry had returned to the house after the murder. A guilty man would not have done this. The very fact that Mr. Leiter refused to account for the time between the hour of separation between the murdered man and himself and the hour of his return, was an additional proof of his innocence. A guilty man would have a specious story prepared. As Mr. Leiter was a man who made his living largely by the writing of stories, plays and opera librettos, it was certain that his reason for not preparing a story was not lack of imagination. No man was better calculated than he to prepare a convincing tale. It was his trade to deal in plots. Would he neglect to create a story in a matter that concerned his life? No one would pay a man of his wit so poor a compliment as to insinuate that he could be so stupid. The prisoner had every reason for wishing to live, and a man of his happy temperament would certainly not imperil his life and cast a horror over it

by an unnecessary crime. He was betrothed to a beautiful young woman, he was popular in society, a leader in Bohemia, a man whose name was rapidly becoming well known. His income was large, his health perfect, his habits good, and his nature gay. Was this a man to commit the most revolting crime in the history of the city? He might be said to be a jester by profession. What had such a man to do with tragedies? All his life he had been distinguished by a peculiarly affectionate nature. Was it likely that he would suddenly become a monster? Without a motive, could he be transformed into a demon? Last of all, he wished to call the attention of the jury to his face, and to ask if it was the face of a man who had committed a crime? A criminal shrank from the gaze of others. This man was a man who had an habitually candid gaze, and whose glance was keen and commanding. If the jury wished to fix a black crime upon a young man of such an open nature, who had never had even a pecadillo laid at his door, he was sorry for them. They knew that hundreds of innocent men had perished because of circumstantial evidence, and that too late those who convicted them had lived to suffer the torments of remorse. Let not this jury be guilty of such a crime. He asked it for their own sakes.

But even as he closed, Roger Brisbane knew he had failed.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A few minutes after he had taken his seat, Brisbane received a note subscribed on the outside:

"Important—immediate."

Tearing it open, he read:

"I have evidence that will clear the prisoner. I have long been possessed of it, but have been kept silent by Leiter. He made me swear that I would keep still, and I shall incur his lasting enmity and contempt by speaking. But I cannot see him murdered for a strained sense of duty. I know that it is out of order to listen to a witness now, and there are particular reasons in addition to the usual ones why the court may refuse. Yet you must make the effort to get a hearing for me. I am Dennis Pond, reporter for the *Chronicle*. I have done nothing but work on this case since the murder. If you cannot get me a hearing, we must have a new trial. There are exceptions which I see could be taken, even with my slight knowledge of law. But, of course I do not mean to make suggestions. I know Leiter has not taken you into his confidence. He could not without betraying the man he is trying to protect at the cost of his own life. I dare say you have thought him the common young aristocrat. He is a hero. I speak the truth, sir, when I say that I can clear him. It is at a terrible price—God only knows what a price to me. But it must be done. I can read Leiter's fate now in the faces of the jurors. And by the time McCook shall have finished, there will not be a ghost of a chance left. I am culpable, I know, for withholding my information, but Leiter overruled me. Say nothing to him now. Only try to get me a hearing before the speech for the prosecution begins. DENNIS POND."

Roger Brisbane acted upon the advice. There was no time to lose, no opportunity for inquiring into the nature of the proposed evidence. He knew that his client was lost as matters now stood. There was therefore nothing to lose and everything to gain.

He begged to address the court for one moment. A witness had presented himself who claimed that he was able to bring evidence that should establish the innocence of the prisoner beyond all doubt. Therefore, against the order of procedure in criminal practice, he prayed the court to listen. The chain of circumstantial evidence now existing against the prisoner had little value, and he believed that twelve men could not be found who would be so unjust as to condemn a fellow creature on such grounds. Yet, that his innocence might be established, beyond all doubt, he begged the court to waive the usual plan of procedure and give ear. It would enconomize time, it might save the state the commission of a crime, and twelve honest men the pangs of future remorse. This was a court of justice, and when justice came knocking, the door could not be shut in her face.

Without taking time for consideration, the court replied to the prayer. And the reply was a refusal.

"It is the judgment of the court," said Judge Barthwait, rising and leaning heavily against the desk, "that the case should not be interrupted at this point for further evidence. Were valid and valuable evidence to be had, it should have been produced in its proper place. It was true that the

functions of the prosecution were not to convict but to see that justice was done. In the present case the state did not intend to fasten guilt where it did not belong; but in the judgment of the court, no evidence could be admitted now. The defense had means for obtaining a future trial, should the evidence not be considered just, and the exceptions taken sustained."

Another note was brought to Brisbane.

"The exceptions will never be sustained. Can you send word to Judge Barthwait that this case will be tried in the newspapers to-morrow morning. That will bring him to terms.

DENNIS POND."

To this Pond received a reply by his messenger:

"I do not understand what you mean by bringing Judge Barthwait to terms. I certainly shall not insult him by sending such a message as you suggest.

R. BRISBANE."

"Very well," wrote back Pond. "I will send him the message myself."

Meanwhile McCook had risen for his speech. He did not once glance at Harry, or at Margaret, whose presence he was aware of; or at the judge, who also avoided looking at the popular attorney. Upon the jury alone did McCook fix his peculiar and powerful eyes

He had a head that suggested that of an eagle. The nose was slightly hooked, the lips thin, flexible and fascinating, the hair inky black, and much longer than fashion dictated. A great wave of it drooped over the forehead, and swaved back and

forward as he talked. The lids hung slightly over the eyes, and from under them the black orbs burned with a fierce lustre. Though a man of a cold manner ordinarily, McCook could thrill himself and his listeners with his magnetic force. He could handle a jury in a manner peculiar to himself, and he was guilty of the vanity of desiring to do this merely because of the exultant pleasure that the consciousness of this power gave him. He used compliment adroitly, and his manner was the perfection of courtesy when he addressed himself to the jury. His speech was carefully prepared. Some of his methods were cheap, but they were disguised by his warm eloquence.

He began by picturing the love the murdered man had lavished upon the prisoner, and pictured the life the prisoner had led. His friends were actresses, wandering musicians, men who made their living by their wits, and he met them principally at the restaurant, the fashionable saloon, and the green-room. What unsuspected habits of vice, was it not possible for a young man to get into so surrounded? Who could tell what pernicious influence, what overwhelming temptation, might be brought to bear upon a character amiable and yielding? It was not necessary to tell an experienced body of men like that before him that actresses were expensive friends, and that they were at the bottom of many crimes. As for the evidence, the jury had heard of the quarrel between the murdered man and the prisoner the night of the crime. The reluc-

tance with which the trusty old servant had given that evidence stamped it as true. He had told them also—and he was corroborated by the detectives who examined the house early in the morning —how the windows had all been found secure. The murderer had not entered a window. The locks on the doors had not been tampered with, as they would have been if the murderer had entered a door. The prisoner had remained from home all night. Why? That was a question to which he could not give a satisfactory answer. Being a man not used to vicious deeds, what more natural than that he should have rushed horrified from the scene of his crime, and only found courage to return in the afternoon of the next day. He refused absolutely to tell where he had been in the meantime. It was very probable, was it not, that he had been with the person who prompted the crime? He admitted that the young man did not have the face of a criminal, and he firmly believed that this had been his first crime. But he had a face of excessive amiability. Those who had studied human nature knew that such a face marked a dangerous person; for, while a man of that character might not originate crimes, he proved a facile tool in the hands of others.

But the attorney progressed slowly. He went into details that the ordinary man would have seen no bearing in. He dilated upon the character of the prisoner, until it stood out in perfect legibility before the listeners. He begged the jury to mark that no professional criminal would have mutilated

his victim as the murdered man was mutilated. That marked the frenzy, the madness of the novice in crime, who felt the taste of blood for the first time, and became suddenly crazed from the exaltation of it. As he dilated upon this possible mood, its effects, and its causes, the cold spring twilight closed in, the court adjourned, and the speech for the prosecution was to be concluded in the morning.

Margaret's heart had hardened toward her father when she heard him refuse to accept the evidence of the witness who had come at the last moment. She felt that he was against Harry. She knew that the jury was prejudiced against him, and she read McCook's relentless determination in his face. It grew more and more difficult for her to preserve her calm, and though she would have liked to have raised her veil and sent Harry one cheering glance, she could not sufficiently command her features to do it. There was nothing but misery and despair in that face, and that was no sight for Harry to see. Two or three times her head swam so giddily that she feared she would fall. The arm of the little damsel was around her lovingly, and the voice of the little damsel was whispering hopeful words, but they did not bring much comfort. A great yearning for help came over the poor girl. She suddenly felt bereft of all friendship. Her father was soon to pronounce the death sentence upon her lover. Her old companion stood earnestly pleading for the downfall of his friend. Mrs. McCook had

come to listen to the triumph of her son. All the friends that had sought her and flattered her were far away now. Not one of them had even thought to write her a comforting note. The deep despair of youth settled upon her. Wild thoughts, foreign to her healthy nature, began to rush through her distracted mind. Try as she would, it was not possible for her to banish the thought of the waters where they rush around the great north pier. The sound swelled in her ears, the beauty of those waters, blue, fleecy, and white, dazzled her eyes. So deep, so swift, so certain, so beautiful were they. What better servant could eternal rest find? Shutting her eyes, she dropped her head on the shoulder of her little friend, and let the stern music bellow in her ears, while all else slipped far away and life seemed a panorama of shifting shadows. On the verge of unconsciousness she was aroused by a touch on the shoulder. A messenger stood by her with a note.

"My dear Miss Barthwait, [it ran] I am about to do a terrible thing. Harry must die unless I do. I will save his life, but, strange as it may seem to you now, by doing so I shall forever sacrifice your friendship, which is dearer to me than you can ever know. I will tell you something which I should have always concealed, but for the present emergency, and I only tell it to you now, that you may know what it costs me to do the work I must do to-morrow. I have loved you, Margaret Barthwait, since the first time that I looked into your true eyes. This love has not been imperti-

nent, because it has not been ambitious. I have never had one thought that was false to Harry. All that this love has revealed to me, all that I have suffered and enjoyed—for even a hopeless love has its pleasures—will make life significant to me as long as I live. When I voluntarily give up your friendship, then, you may know that I do so at the utmost cost to myself. More, I break my word, given honorably and on my truth as a man and a friend. But I take the cost of this, too. Harry must be cleared. Everything else falls into nothingness. Forgive me if you can. Say nothing to-night to any one, as you value Harry's life, though Harry may be less to you in the future. Poor girl, poor girl! My heart bleeds as I think of you. I wish it were possible for me to save you all this misery. Yet I have never met a woman so calculated to endure the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. God bless and keep you through all dark ways! May His spirit shadow you with love and tenderness! DENNIS POND."

The people were leaving the court room. As the excited crowd moved heavily out, Margaret saw Pond in the midst, lifting his hat to her with a mournful gesture. She bowed low in return. Harry had been taken quickly away. The judge was already in the ante-room. She followed him, and touched him on the arm. He looked down on her with a startled glance, but pressed her hand warmly.

"I am going home with you to-night, papa," she said.

"Best not, Margaret. Go back to your own nest, daughter. I shall not be good company to-night."

"Papa, do not send me away! I want you terri-

bly. My heart is breaking, papa. Let me come with you."

Yet, even as she spoke, she shrank from him. She did not want to go with him, but she meant to use her influence. She had confidence that her tears might yet soften the judge toward Harry. No moral qualms withheld her. She was not afraid of interfering with justice. To begin with, she believed Harry innocent, and in the second place, she loved him. Women have no compunctions about interfering with the course of justice, where one whom they love is concerned.

She got the judge to yield at last, and sending the little damsel back to Walnut street, she rode home in the carriage with her father.

As the two rode home together, the judge drew the curtains of the carriage, and, wrapping his arms about his daughter, gave himself up to communion with her.

"The house has been very, very lonely without its daughter, Margaret," he whispered, fixing his brilliant eyes upon her.

"The house ought not to be longer without her," replied Margaret. He did not look cruel, she said to herself.

"You are getting very beautiful, dear," he said. "Men are sure to love you—plenty of them."

"I do not want the love of men for anything," she said, stroking his brow. "I want my love. I want Harry. If I cannot have him, I will have no one. You are not going to take him from me. You cannot be so cruel, papa."

"I must do what I must, daughter. You can surely see that. My will is not my own."

"Papa, forgive me if I say something unkind. But I believe you had rather see Harry convicted than cleared. Answer me truly—is it not so?"

"No!" cried the judge, excitedly. "I hope to heaven that he will go free. It will be an infinite relief to me if he does."

"Then," said Margaret, "why did you not accept the evidence of that witness?"

"For reasons, my daughter, that you can never know or understand. These things are not for women—"

"Papa! That from you! Tell me the reason. Did you know who the witness was?"

"I suspected. He had nothing but a sensational story. I knew something of the matter before. It would only have delayed the case to no end."

But all that evening, Margaret ceased not to use every art in her power to enlist the sympathy of her father. She sang to him, talked her best, dilated upon the old happy life before the murder, talked of her courtship, their future joy, her marriage. Did she touch the judge? She could not determine. She slept in her old room, and slept sound. The next morning early she was awakened by the bursting into the room of her father.

"Margaret, Margaret," whispered he, creeping up to the bed and raising one finger. "Sit up! Listen! Hear what the boys on the street are calling."

Margaret sat up and pushed the hair out of her

eyes. Some strange alteration had come over the judge. His whole frame had shrunken, his eyes were deep in his head, he looked very old.

"They will cry again in a minute. Listen," said he.

It seemed to Margaret, suddenly, as if a black shadow had fallen upon her. Or as if a flood of angry waters were rushing over her and crushing the life out. The sensation of suffocation grew as she looked at that old face before her, with its frightened eyes. The figure threw up its hands for her to listen again. There was a newsboy right under the window bawling the attractions of his sheet.

"Mornin' *Cronikul!* Full 'count of the 'sposure of Judge Barthwait. All about the Leiter murder. Judge Barthwait guilty."

"Of what?" asked Maragret, straining her eyes at her father in the dimness.

"Of the murder of Henry Leiter. Get up, Margaret, and dress. We must go. Get your things together before the servants are up."

"I will be ready," said Margaret.

CHAPTER XIX.

"No judge upon the bench has so frequently and so bitterly denounced the interference of the press in the course of the law as has Judge Barthwait. And it may be added that the rebukes of others never cut so deep as did his, for of all the men who have dignified the bench of Cook County, Ill., he has been the most respected, his judgments have been the most highly esteemed, his reputation for justice, foresight, penetration and humanity, the widest."

Thus began the article in the morning *Chronicle*, which the little damsel read sitting on the cover of her machine, and Harry read sitting on his bench, and McCook read with his coffee, and every one in Chicago read where and when he might. The article went on:

"It is an odd chance of fate, that it should become the duty of a newspaper to try Judge Barthwait by the very method that he has so often depreciated in the treatment of others. But there are times when the delays of the law are too great to meet present emergencies. Such a time is the present, and, therefore, is it necessary to try Judge Barthwait at the bar of public opinion. Only the newspapers can do this effectively, and quickly, and, therefore, the *Chronicle* must do it.

"Harry Leiter, one of the best-known and best-liked of society young men in this city, is at present on trial for his life. He stands accused of murdering his uncle, Henry Leiter, on the night of January 15, of this year.

"The evening preceding that murder had been pleasantly spent. There were present, as the guests of the venerable Henry Leiter, Judge Barthwait and his daughter; William Wendell McCook, States attorney; his mother, Madam McCook; and Harry Leiter. That night, after the guests had left, and after Harry Leiter had gone to his room, the old man, sitting in the wonderful room which is famous in this city as one of the best of private museums, was killed. If a fiend had torn him, it could not have butchered him with more malicious intent. His face was slashed with gashes in such a manner that it gave an expression of sinister mirth to his corpse. But for being so ghastly, he would have been ludicrous. In this respect it was the most remarkable crime ever committed in this city. Unfortunately, Harry Leiter and his uncle had had a slight quarrel, and after Harry had gone to his room he was touched with remorse, and came down stairs for the purpose of begging his uncle's forgiveness, but he found the light extinguished. It had been put out by the man who murdered Henry Leiter; for the deed was already committed.

"Restless and unhappy, young Leiter felt his way through the dark, helped himself to his coat and hat and went out for a walk in the star-lit night. By a strange coincidence, he had that night become betrothed to Margaret Barthwait, his old companion and school friend. Like a true lover, he turned his steps toward the Barthwait mansion. As he was slowly sauntering by, musing as a lover might, he saw a figure run rapidly to the trellis work that decorates the porte-cochere of that imposing residence, and climb it. Before he could raise objections the man had thrown up the window of the room Leiter knew to be Miss Barthwait's, and entered. As he did so he spoke her name. Leiter

heard him say: 'Now, my pretty Margaret, I am here.' What could a lover, who believed in the truth of his mistress as he did in heaven, think? The gas was lighted for a few moments. Then it was put out. The house was dark and silent, and that man, whose figure looked strangely familiar to the tormented man outside, was within.

"Not to keep the reader in suspense, the man who entered that window was the man who murdered Leiter. That same night that man had killed two other living objects. One was a parrot and the other was a rabbit. The parrot belonged to Margaret Barthwait, and it was killed with a stiletto that the judge kept to cut his magazines with.

"The rabbit was Harry Leiter's, and it was killed in the Leiter conservatory, with a little garden rake. When the old butler at the Leiter house came down the morning after the murder, the first thing that met his eyes was this little creature, slaughtered as if by a wild beast. He sent one of the women servants to inform the old master. Entering the room where he usually sat in the morning, she found him in his favorite chair, in grotesque hideousness—dead.

"The statement that the *Chronicle* must now make is a terrible one, and the full consequences of that statement have been considered.

"Judge Barthwait, alone in his library with that pet parrot, wantonly killed it. Judge Barthwait returned to the conservatory of his friend's house after the others had left, and wantonly tore out the brains of the sleeping rabbit with the tiny garden rake. Judge Barthwait went to his home, could not sleep for the fever in his blood, went out for a walk to calm himself, and, passing the Leiter house, saw a light burning. The good old man within was still sitting where Harry had left him,

mourning over the little misunderstanding that had come between him and his beloved boy. The judge crept up to the window. It was unlocked. The old butler said next morning to the reporter who was sent to investigate the matter, that after he had got in bed he was troubled with a sense of having failed to lock one of the front room windows. What more natural than that he should have done so? The judge enters then. His old friend is surprised to find him coming into the house in that manner, but lays it to eccentricity, or thinks that he has come to consult with him about the marriage of their children. He is not alarmed when he sees him pick up a large pocket knife that lies near, nor agitated when he approaches him.

"And Judge Barthwait wantonly murders his old friend, Henry Leiter. Then he locks the window that none may know how he entered. He goes out by the door and he flings away the knife as he goes. By a fell chance that knife bears Harry Leiter's name, and the reporter for the *Chronicle* picked it up the following day, where he had dropped it. Then the judge runs madly through the streets, this way and that. At last he reaches his home. His thirst for blood is not satisfied yet. He will cap the climax of his bloody carnival by slaying his daughter. He enters her room from the outside, so that if he is discovered he may be taken for a burglar. He lights the gas, approaches his daughter —and his heart fails him. He goes to his room and leaves her.

"The next morning it is possible that remorse comes. But this article does not intend to furnish the explanations for the remarkable and unique crimes of Judge Barthwait. These motives are not yet known. The facts are given, and to these, therefore, must this article be restricted.

"Meanwhile Leiter, maddened by what he esteems his lady's infidelity, rushes off without knowing where he is going. In the morning, he is found lying on the ground near Lawndale. A farmer picks him up, carries him to town, and drops him at a Turkish bath house. In the middle of the afternoon the young man recovers from his stupor, and goes home, to find his benefactor and kinsman murdered. Can he tell where he has spent the night? Obviously not. If he does he must tell that he saw a man enter the window of an honorable lady, and one who is still dearer to him than life, and that he saw that man turn out the gas and stay there in the darkness. His lips are sealed as they could not be by any other incident. He, being a gentleman, must die before he can speak. And this, from first to last, he intended to do.

"The public may be curious to know how the reporter gleaned his first suspicion of the murderer. The story is a short one. A few days after the crime he was walking with Miss Barthwait, whom he had met upon the street, and of whom he desired to ask a few questions. As she neared her home, the greyhound, which passers-by have noticed ornamenting the veranda of the judge's mansion these several years, bounded out to meet his mistress as if stricken with terror. When she tried to force him up the steps, he shrank in visible fright. She suggested that something might have taken possession of the kennel, and the reporter ran hastily around the house. As he did so he saw Judge Barthwait entering the back door. The reporter already knew of the killing of the rabbit and the parrot. And he could not help being struck by the coincidence. Yet so far above reproach was the character, the sanity, and philanthropy of Judge Barthwait, that he put it from his mind.

"Several weeks later the reporter was walking along North Clark street in a hard snow storm. The figures of those upon the street showed but dimly in the strange light, but he was attracted toward two men who seemed to hold some sort of relation to each other. From the first the reporter was persuaded that one was following the other. And the curious part was that the man who was being followed seemed a common tramp, while the pursuer was a well-dressed man, who walked with a proud carriage and with that pose of the head that marks the well-born gentleman. They both turned down the stairs that lead down the side of the bridge to the dock. The reporter leaned idly over the bridge, wondering what they could want there on such a night. It was easy to guess the first man wanted a night's shelter in a doorway. But what could the other desire?

"Suddenly the reporter thought he heard a cry, but the air was so muffled with that blanket of snow that he could not be sure. He hastened down the stairs. Midway of the block he found the first man murdered. A light falling from a high window showed him that the throat had been cut and the face lacerated in a fantastic manner, exactly like that of Henry Leiter!

"Why had the form of the man who followed looked so familiar? That was a question that settled itself a few evenings later when the reporter had occasion to visit the house of Judge Barthwait, ostensibly on a simple errand, in reality to see if he would talk about the Leiter case. For, knowing him to be a man of unrivaled experience in criminal matters, and the friend of the murdered man, as well as of the accused, his conversation was valuable. Sitting there, the reporter's eye fell upon one shelf of the Judge's book-case

which was so remarkable that he could not keep from examining the titles. He had observed them closely for some time before he saw that the judge was greatly annoyed by his scrutiny of them. This annoyance showed itself in words so rude that the reporter was obliged to leave. As he did so, the judge walked rather angrily before him to the door. And the reporter recognized the walk.

"If any prove incredulous, let them listen to the titles of the books: 'Neurosis, or the Blot Upon the Brain,' by Ireland; 'The Source of Crime,' by Richard Brownell; 'The Incurable Criminal,' by Joseph O'Neil; 'Hereditary Crime,' by Martin Cosgrove; 'Mimetic Hysteria, and Contagious Insanity,' by I. Goodall, and many others of the same sort. From these books it will be apparent that he has been a close student of crime These investigations have been carried to a great length —to a sinister length. Yet it must once more be remarked that this article does not deal with the motives of Judge Barthwait's crimes.

"It appeared to the two or three persons who were watching the course of Judge Barthwait's mania that it was taking a desperate turn, and that at any time his daughter's life might be sacrificed. Miss Barthwait was therefore persuaded to leave home for a time. A tale was invented which made this conscientious young lady willing to deceive her father as to her whereabouts. She was supposed to be at Tillingham Marshes, where her father has a snug little shooting box. Instead of that, with a trusted companion, she was living in the city.

"Meanwhile, the reporter had gone to Tillingham Marshes himself. He believed that the judge was laboring under the worst form of his mania, and that when he thought his daughter to be there in practical solitude, he would yield to the tempta-

tion and make one more effort to take her life. It was even so. A few nights passed quietly. At last came a night when a man entered the window of the room where Miss Margaret would have slept had she been there. This man rushed through the darkness to the bed, and leaning over it, fumbling and muttering, felt for the form he expected to find there. The reporter, sitting in the far end of the room, lit a match. With a cry the figure leaped through the window, carrying the sash with him. No train went back to the city before 8 o'clock in the morning. The reporter took that train. As he looked up in the mirror, he saw reflected in it the face of Judge Barthwait, and on one cheek was a slight bloody rent, as if his barber had cut him, or, as if he had been injured with broken glass. One hand was swathed in a handkerchief. The judge did not speak to the reporter, although he knew him.

"There was no longer any doubt in the mind of the reporter that Judge Barthwait was the victim of a terrible mania.

"The great Leiter case was called. As was his place, Judge Barthwait sat on the bench. The prisoner before him was a victim of his own terrible, unbelievable crimes. More, he was the child of his dear friend—not his son, to be sure, but as dearly beloved by him as if he were. He was the betrothed lover of his daughter. But did the judge flinch? Apparently not. He has sat upon that bench with dignity, wearing a virtuous front. There is some strange mental condition here which cannot hastily be arrived at. Harry Leiter has long been acquainted with the truth. He has known that this judge was the culprit. Yet for the sake of that honored name, and because of his dread lest Miss Barthwait should suffer, he has

concealed what he knew. More, he has obliged the reporter, who was his friend and confidant, to do the same. Silence would have been kept till the end, had there been any chance that Harry Leiter could be cleared. But the chain of circumstantial evidence seemed too strong to break. Even so successful an attorney as Roger Brisbane was not able to give an innocent aspect to the circumstances that surrounded him. At the last moment the reporter offered his evidence. It was refused by the court. Being aware that an appeal for a new trial will be met with a similar reply, it becomes necessary to make this open exposure.

"If this is a lie, Judge Barthwait will be in court to-day. If it be true, he will not. An accomplished criminal might face it still. Judge Barthwait is not an accomplished criminal. It is hard to tell what he is.

"All display in writing has been avoided. There has been no effort made at cheap sensationalism. No one knows better than the writer the full meaning of all that has been said here, or how terrible are the accusations made.

"Judge Barthwait has been noted all over this country for the extraordinary dissertations which he addresses to juries. Their profundity have won for him a great reputation. He has made a deeper study of the causes that lead to crime than any other man upon the criminal bench.

"The question is, has he been making studies from life? Has he taken to the commission of experimental crimes? Has the love of killing, latent in all men, been awakened in him?

"Whatever the motive, Judge Barthwait stands accused this morning before the people of Cook county, of the commission of foul murder. The *Chronicle* makes this accusation and will prove it.

The *Chronicle* maintains the innocence of Harry Leiter of murder, and will prove it."

Thus ended the article.

Long before the hour for court to meet, the corridors were filled with an awed but vulture-like crowd. The morbid in human nature lies but a little way below the surface. To watch death struggles, or the progress of great despairs, to see a hanging, or listen to an exposure, is a great diversion and entertainment for the many.

At length the court doors opened. The crowd rushed in, in spite of the efforts of the bailiffs to restrain them. The lawyers took their places; the pale reporters entered with business-like air, as they, no doubt, will at the crack of doom. The prisoner was brought in, white as death, with a look of misery he had never worn when his life was in danger. A half hour passed. The bailiff stood ready to call: "Hear ye, hear ye, the honorable, the County Court of Cook."

Presently a deputy entered hurriedly and spoke in a low voice to the clerk. The latter appeared puzzled, but stepped down and consulted with the crowd of waiting attorneys. The lawyers talked in subdued tones, and most of them left the court room. Then out came the papers from the pockets of the vultures. "If this is true, Judge Barthwait will not be in court to-day," they read. There were sinister smiles and looks in which enjoyment was barely concealed. Had he been a less mighty man the pleasure would not have been so great. But as

it was—it was delicious. The vultures could have voted a resolution of gratitude to the absent judge for the surprise and pleasure he had given them. But as for the prisoner, he was being carried out in the dead faint of a strong man.

Pond cast one look of pity at him and then hurried from the room.

"He will never clasp my hand in friendship again," he said sadly to himself. He sent a messenger to the housekeeper of the Barthwait house, asking if Miss Margaret or the judge were at home.

He waited around the corner of the house for an answer. They were not at home. He took a cab and dashed to Walnut street. The little damsel had not seen Margaret since she left the court-room the night before. Then she dropped her head on her arms and burst into a tumult of tears, and Pond, unnerved at last, sat beside her, and, while he wiped her eyes, shed some bitter surreptitious drops himself.

CHAPTER XX.

How foreign seemed the city that morning to Margaret. Had she ever seen those houses before, or those towering elevators or the etching of masts against that somber sky, or the tangle of wires overhead in the streets? Yes, thousands of times, and yet they were all strange. Had she ever known that mumbling, stooping old man beside her, who clung to her hand, and asked constantly where they were, and what had happened, and why they hurried so? It was her father, and she had loved and trusted him all her life; prayed for him every night; raised her lips for his kisses every morning. Hidden in her bosom was a fortune. The judge had long since held a mistrust of banks and in his safe kept all his savings. In the first lucid moments that followed his shock he had thought of his money, as he had of the necessity of flight. Then suddenly he collapsed. His judgment, his very sanity, left him. Margaret saw beside her a foolish old man, who talked constantly and said nothing.

She did not know where they were going. The head-lines of the *Chronicle* told her what they had to flee from. She never thought of deserting her father; nor, indeed, did it for one moment occur to him that she would do so. The instinct of blood impelled them to act together. There was no sac-

rifice implied by Margaret's action. She followed her daughterly impulse, which was as it should be. With all thoroughly healthy and true-hearted children this impulse is common. There seemed to be a dual action in the mind of Margaret. One part of it saw dimly the confusion, the misery of her condition, and wondered over the outcome. The other part acted clearly to meet the emergency of the present. This clearer part told her that it would not do to take a train at one of the large city stations. It was already growing late enough for the early workers to be on the street, and in every glance she imagined she saw suspicion and apprehension. A cab passed her, which had been taking some night-keeper home. She called it and put her father inside.

"We have a long way to go," she said to the driver, "and I wish to hire you by the hour."

Did she see suspicion in the eye of the little Dane who sat on the vehicle? What if he should refuse to take them? His pale green eyes contracted. It may have been the morning sun that caused them to do so, but Margaret, who saw a foe in every bush, thought it was suspicion.

She began to act with the diplomacy that never afterward deserted her through all the long trial that was to follow.

"Of course I do not want to go, unless your prices are reasonable," she said. "If you charge too much we must take the car. We are going to Lawndale."

She hit on that place because that was where the little damsel came from, and the name was the first that suggested itself to her tongue.

"My horse has not had his breakfast," said the man.

"We can stop and get that on the road. I will pay for it if you will go for fifty cents an hour."

"Couldn't go for that. Seventy-five is the rate."

"Well, I think that is too much, but I will pay it. We will stop to feed the horse on Ogden avenue. Drive out on that road, please."

She got in, and the little Dane put the small satchels on top, let down the apron, and left her alone with—a murderer. But he did not look harmful. His eyes wandered with a childish restlessness. His white hair looked very beautiful and very pitiable. His delicate features were refined into an expression almost effeminate. His hands played with each other like those of an invalid. Margaret took them in her own and held them still. Under her steady regard the judge's head sank on his breast, and in a little while, in spite of the jolting motion of the cab, he was fast asleep.

Margaret was afraid to draw the curtains, lest the very fact of their being drawn should excite curiosity. Yet she feared the glances that the passer-by shot into the windows. She wondered how long it would be before the house would be searched. The dear old house! So sacred! So full of holy memories, or treasured articles!

But she did not mourn much. Her heart beat

no faster. She seemed to be regarding herself from afar off. This was not Margaret Barthwait who was flying from her native city with her father beside her, a self-made outlaw! It was some one to be infinitely pitied. This was not Margaret Barthwait who was leaving her dear love and all the hope and sweetness of life before her. It was some poor girl whose miseries would dismay Margaret Barthwait. Margaret Barthwait had friends, position, respect, love. *This* girl had nothing but shame for her portion, and a madman for her companion. She was going to a shameful concealment, perhaps to death.

The horse was the proverbial cab-hack. Yet, in spite of his general worthlessness, he had a frightful appetite, and ate as if he were trying to fill the pit of darkness. Then he moped on again. It was well in the middle of the forenoon when he reached Lawndale. Margaret had the driver put them down before a hotel. There she ordered breakfast, and saw her father eat like any other hungry animal.

Once through with the breakfast, Margaret inquired carelessly about the westward bound trains. There was none till the middle of the afternoon on the road passing through. She carelessly remarked that the noon train went east then. This remark brought a surprised expression to the face of the clerk. There was no noon train, and the trains going east went no further than Chicago. Where was it that the young lady wanted to go?

Woman-like, Margaret had but a slight sense of direction. She knew nothing about the towns on the Burlington route. But by a fortunate trick of memory she recollected going to the Quaker hamlet of Western Springs once on that road. Breathing more freely after her answer, she went back to where her father reclined on the sofa in the stuffy parlor. Sitting near him was a man reading the Morning *Chronicle!*

Till that moment Margaret had not realized that they were in as much danger out of the city as in it. The papers were there before her, and in the village she would be regarded with a closer scrutiny than in the city. What should she do? Return to Chicago? Already she thought that the clerk was forming a theory about her. Acting on impuse, she ordered an open carriage. They would take a ride about the country, since the day was becoming so pleasant, she informed the clerk. And that they might be saved the trouble of returning to the hotel, they would take their traveling sacks with them. She would not have been surprised if the clerk had refused to let them pass the door. But he made no remark, and she wondered if she had not been too communicative. Once out, in the open country, she felt safer. Her father said little now, but looked around at the budding trees, and the springing grass with an air of the most innocent curiosity. He did not have a care on his mind. Had he been born that morning he could not have been more free from responsibility than he was.

Down the long, winding prairie road, backward and forward, Margaret kept casting her eyes. They might be followed! Or it might even be that the driver now with them was listening to all that might be said, and that he had orders not to let them go. No sooner had this idea taken possession of her mind than she was eager to put her liberty to the test. She tried to think of some excuse for alighting, but could find none with which she was satisfied. They were several miles from the little village now and had skirted the edge of a couple more. On the road were a number of houses where beer and meals were sold. Such road houses need no description. At one of these Margaret begged to alight. Once on the veranda with her father beside her, she said that she had concluded to stay there over night. Her father was not feeling well, and she thought the fresh air would do him good. And now for the first time she began to feel the trembling of the frame, the fright of heart that was natural under the circumstances.

The natural surprise of the driver filled her with trepidation which she could hardly conceal. Yet she was careful not to pay him too well, lest he should think her anxious to get rid of him. He loitered around for a long time, filling her with nameless dread, and talking with the stable boy, and the rosy-cheeked girl in the dining-room.

Would he never go? Yes, he would and did, and Margaret was left to ask herself what next? One

of the first things she did, was to secure the services of a barber.

"Father is troubled so with headaches," she said to the strapping darky that responded to her summons, "that I thought it might be a good thing to cut his hair. You see, it is so long now, and so are his whiskers. Best cut them both. Give his face a clean shave and shingle his hair."

The job was to the barber's liking. When he had finished, the aristocratic head of the judge took to itself a very common aspect, and his face lost its judicial look with his whiskers. A weak chin was made visible, and there were great hollows in the cheeks that Margaret had not dreamed of.

"Do you want another job?" Margaret asked suddenly of the darkey, who was laboring with the whisk broom, rolling his tongue with each motion, as if on the activeness of that member depended his success. "You might cut off my hair, too, if you think you can do it well. Summer will soon be here, and I shall find this mop disagreeable."

Half an hour later, shorn of her beautiful hair, she went out to a little store near, where all sorts of things were kept for country sale. There she bought coarse shoes for herself and father, overalls and blouse of jean for the judge, and a dress of purple calico, ready made, for herself. With hats of corresponding ugliness, a rough over coat and a shawl of dull tint, she returned to the hotel. The judge was walking the floor restlessly, and in his

eyes Margaret thought she saw the light of returning misery. That meant returning reason also, still she was not glad to see it yet. Not till they were beyond danger. She dreaded his lamentations if he awoke to a sense of their trouble, and felt she would gladly save him that much. He was willing to change his clothes, and to put on those she had purchased. So she left him to do it, while in another room she donned the coarse dress, the outlandish hat, and the awkward shawl. Drawing off the delicate stockings of silk and the dainty kid boots, she replaced them with those from her packages. Then she looked at herself critically. Turning this way and that, now on tip-toe, and now on a chair, she viewed herself in the mirror, from every standpoint. It was certain that there were few suggestions of the fashionable city girl, in that ill-dressed figure, with the face staring baldly out from her cropped head. Nor would any have thought that old man in jeans with the wandering stare, was Judge Barthwait, elegant, courteous and haughty.

The thing now was not to let the people of the house see the change that had taken place. So, putting on the cloak and hat she had worn when she came, she told them that just after dark she expected some frends to call for them. These friends had driven to the city, but promised to stop for them on their way home. It was not necessary to send supper up, for they would eat with their friends a little later. On that excuse Margaret managed to get the satchels put out on the

platform. These held additional clothing now and a box of matches as well.

It was not difficult after the twilight had deepened to slip from the house, take the light bags, and walk down the road as if in anxious outlook for the expected friends. Once on the way, Margaret quickened the pace, and turning to the north, walked at random over the prairie. Before morning came the clothes that had been worn in the city, had served to furnish fuel for a fire by which they warmed themselves, and the two figures trudging over the prairie were those of a farmer and his awkward daughter, who walked with a slouching gait and talked with a nasal twang and a free use of the double negative.

CHAPTER XXI.

Dull, indeed, were the days now on Walnut street. The little damsel had written with tears for her father to come for her and take her home. Meanwhile she sewed early and late with trembling fingers on the wonderful infant wardrobes. All was mysterious to the poor little damsel, and she could do nothing but exclaim and weep. How could she get used to the idea of her dear Margaret flying over the country with some strange monster, as the judge had now come to seem to her? Her Margaret, kind, natural, warm to touch, pleasant to the sense, full of homely and comfortable ways, out somewhere now, surrounded by eternal darkness! For in such melancholy condition did Jeanne picture her dear friend. Two whole days passed between the last visit of Pond's, in which they had wept together, and the present one. The young man looked pale and worn, and he met Jeanne with a sort of shyness, as if he feared a rebuff from her.

"I feel like a culprit, continually," he said, taking her plump little hand in a grateful clasp. "I have done something that will always cause me remorse, and yet I shall always be able to tell myself that if I had it to do over again, I should do exactly the same thing. It is a terrible thing that I have done though."

"Dear, dear," said the little damsel, putting up

her handkerchief to her blue eyes, "you must not fret. There is no need for any of us to fret. It was all in—in—evitable."

This was a very long word for the little damsel to say, who, in her conversation, as in all else, was the soul of simplicity.

"You do not blame me, then?"

"Not a bit; not a little bit. Of course I know a woman has no business to be logical. She is always expected to be sentimental, and she seldom falls short of the expectation. But in the present case, I have the courage to set aside my natural feeling in the case. I am sorry that it was made necessary for you to do what you did, but I realize that it was your misfortune, and not your fault. But my poor Margaret—"

"Don't, Miss Jeanne! For God's sake, do not speak of her. How could I imagine that she would do as she has? I thought the judge would be apprehended, yet I would do nothing to aid in that. The police were not informed—no one in authority was. I simply wrote my article, and went to my room to pass a miserable night. I did not know that Miss Margaret had gone home with her father. I thought she was here with you and that she would not see the paper till late in the morning. Instead, she was with him, and her first noble impulse was to protect him from the consequences of his crimes. She has gone away with that lunatic. At this moment she may be dead, or in frightful distress and fear. What have I driven her to?"

"She knows so little about the world," murmured Jeanne, joining in the lament. "She was so sensitive and modest. And now she will be going about the country like an escaped criminal."

"But I could not let Leiter die in the place of that madman, who sat there ready to pronounce the sentence of death on him. I could not let my friend be sacrificed to such a monster."

"That you couldn't," said Jeanne. "You did just right. Think no more about it."

"I am glad one person thinks so. You have a very comfortable way with you, Miss Jeanne."

"I am glad my way is comfortable, for I certainly am not. I am going home. Pa is coming for me to-day or to-morrow. I have got all my work out and all my bills paid."

"Bother your bills," said Pond. 'Where is your home?"

"Away out in the country, Mr. Pond, where no one ever comes."

"Yes, they do go there; I am sure they do. You are not going to leave me without any friends, are you?"

"Distance has nothing to do with friendship, Mr. Pond. I can give you my warmest esteem, no matter where I am."

"By Jove! You are a perfect Tartar!" cried Pond.

"Thank you, I should think you would be anxious to preserve the friendship of such a person. But instead of talking about myself, I should like to ask you where Harry Leiter is."

"The case has been *'nolle prossed.'* In a few days he will be at liberty to go where he pleases."

"And where will that be?"

"In search of Margaret, I suppose. I have not been near him since. He would not see me now, you know."

"What good will it do him to find Margaret? She could not let him love her. She cannot marry him."

"Does it look that way to you?" asked Pond anxiously. "If you were in her place, would you decide so?"

"Why, I would surely. For one thing, there is the shame of it."

"Oh, nonsense, there is no shame! Shame could not touch Margaret Barthwait."

"Believe me, she will look at it as I say. Think what an injury her father has done him—done her lover. How would it be possible to reconcile them? Think how horrible it would be to even make the effort. It would not be right. There is blood in it. They can never meet. I think myself that Harry will shrink from her. Not because he dislikes her, but because of the blood on it."

"If he deserts her he is a black knave!"

"Do you know what I think, Mr. Pond?"

"No, I do not. Whatever you think must be right."

"Well, then, I think you love Margaret."

"You do, do you? Well, I tell you what I think: I think all who have ever known her have loved her.

I am like the rest. But now she no doubt holds me as the worst of men."

"She does nothing of the sort. Of course she mourns for her father's crimes, but she cannot hate the exposer of them, when he sacrificed himself to save her lover. You give women credit for no sense at all."

"You are right, my little girl, I am morbid. Anyone would be who lived the life I do. Fancy my year in and year out at a boarding house. Well, then, there is the newspaper. If you think that it is a great thing to be a writer for the newspaper, you are mistaken. There is nothing in it at all. I might work conscientiously and well for fifty years for a salary that will not compare favorably with the fool clerk in a gentlemen's furnishing store, and at the end of that fifty years I would be denominated a pensioner and a fossil. There is absolutely nothing to look forward to except to become a confirmed pessimist. Not a creature on the face of this earth cares for me, and the secret of it largely is that I do not in the least care for anybody."

The face of the little damsel was very red indeed, but not a word escaped her lips. Pond went on without looking at her.

"Is it any wonder that the sight of a woman like Margaret Barthwait should wake all the poetry in my nature? Can you marvel that I, who so seldom meet women of any sort, should find the presence of such a one an infinite rest and delight? I tell

you, I felt the irritation, the bitterness fall away from me. Life had a new meaning. For a time I became almost unselfish, and I assure you that I was never nearer being unselfish than when I held her father up to public dread and exposed him for a murderous deceiver—the most preposterous criminal, and the most remarkable one I verily believe that ever disgraced this city. I saved the life of the man she loved, but at the cost to myself of her dear regard. And at the same time, I made her father an outlaw."

Not a word said the little damsel. But now in place of the flush there was a painful pallor.

"Yet I am wrong," cried Pond, throwing his hands up and clasping them back of his head, "to abuse our profession to you. I tell you it is the most fascinating one in the world. Let your apprenticeship be ever so short, it will win you forever. So long as life lasts you must keep pen in hand and wits a-jog. The poison will not leave the blood. Like hydrophobia, it will stay till it kills you. You can not know the marvel of it. Each day brings new pleasures. All that is best in art, in music, in literature, in science, in discovery is for you to hear of first, to judge of, to enjoy, to take the best of. The passion and pain of life lie before you. You have opportunities for prying into the most impregnable hearts. You are bound to become a cosmopolitan in the widest sense. The filthy foreigner, eating rotten melons in the city alleys, seems not very different in the

end from the white-cravatted clergyman sitting sedately in his study and regarding you from a height of frigid propriety. Men and women seem the shuttlecocks of fate and all destiny but a joke. You seem to look at life from some high point, till all is but a panorama of shadows. And you do not care. Nothing matters. It is a tremendous jest—and yet you watch for the end with bated breath."

"What is a jest?" asked Jeanne with white lips.

"Life is. Life is a thing you know nothing about. Do you imagine these self-restrained men and women who walk the street with propriety and candor are the real men and women? Nothing is more absurd. These are in reality desperate creatures. They long for death, and yet they fear to meet it. Religion is a lost philosophy, the fierce competition in this republic makes every man fearful lest he shall be the next to be pushed to the wall. I tell you they are fearful for the present, doubtful for the future, and they are as tired as galley-slaves. I pity them while I laugh."

"I wish I were dead," whispered Jeanne. "I did not know life was so dreadful."

Pond left her in that mood.

"I am a brute," he said to himself. "What a sensitive little soul she is. What a pity that I cannot love her! And yet, fool that I am, what could I give her in return for her pure loveliness? I will not rush in where angels fear to tread."

CHAPTER XXII.

Liberty is valuable only under certain conditions. Harry did not especially prize it when it came to him. Destiny had him by the throat. There was no escape, apparently—for destiny is not a slight opponent. What to do first, was a question that he might well find it difficult to answer. To find Margaret was to find the judge, and the least that Harry could wish, was that the judge should not be found. It was therefore impossible to put detectives on their track. The search must be conducted quietly.

Pond did not come near him, and he did not look him up. He was thankful from the bottom of his heart, for the devotion Pond had shown to his cause, and yet he secretly accused him of coarseness and of sensationalism in his method of showing up the unfortunate old man. Harry did not stop to consider that Pond's first duty was to his paper, and that Pond had actually been disloyal to that duty for a time, out of friendship for him. He only knew that Margaret had been made to suffer. To find her, and to comfort her, was his one idea.

Harry was satisfied, after an investigation, that Margaret had plenty of money with her, and that relieved his anxiety slightly. The safe stood open, as the judge had left it that morning of the flight.

Harry knew enough of the judge's habits to be certain of the large amount of money he ordinarily kept there, and its present moneyless condition assured him that the leave-taking had not been without calmness. Mrs. McKee, the mournful housekeeper, was, fortunately, placed at last. It was something after years of waiting, to find adequate an outlet for her talent for sorrow. She had simply swathed herself in the habiliments of woe, and moved with a slow and stately grace that suggested the funeral cortege. She recalled incidents in the life of Margaret—incidents of kindness—and told them with a sort of obitual accent. Harry found the door-bell muffled, and the chairs tied up in the Holland covers, while the piano was covered with a ghastly winding sheet. Not a line or a clew could Harry find that would give hint of Margaret's hiding place, and he came to the conclusion that she had gone without plans, and had gone where chance directed.

He closed up the house, kept Mrs. McKee and the stout stable lad to look after the house, and directed the rest of the servants to find other places. The judge's room he thought best to lock up. To be sure, the police had already rummaged in it, but without finding anything of interest to them, but it was impossible to tell what might be concealed there.

It was a trial that a less poetic man might have suffered from, to enter the room where Margaret had slept through all her sweet girlhood. Not a

thing was disturbed. In the closet hung the dresses so dearly familiar; on the table were the late magazines and the books that she and Harry loved, and had read over and over together for many years. The perfumes, the jewel cases, the potted flowers, the divan, with its Turkish cushions, all wrung his heart with their familiarity. Standing side by side near the divan were two little slippers that bore the imprint of her feet still. Above was the guitar with its worn ribbon.

Over on Walnut street a repetition of the trial awaited him. But Margaret had never impressed her individuality upon that place. It was the little damsel who was visible there in the brightness, and the air of industry. The room was somewhat too crude, too gay, for Margaret. A simple taste and a happy one was visible there. Margaret had luxurious habits and a love for rare and historic things. A pleasant little den, though, did Harry find it, although the poor little mistress was not in a pleasant mood. She was engaged in taking down the fashion plates that hung on the walls, and as she did so she heaved many a grievous sigh.

Harry had never met the little damsel, but she knew who he was immediately from the pictures of him she had seen, and she held out both hands with a very engaging gesture of welcome. Something about her sincerity brought the tears to Harry's hot eyes.

"There is no one that I can think of, except my

own dear girl, that I would be so glad to see as you," he said with truth.

"Dear me, yes," said Jeanne incoherently. "No more glad than I, I guess; sit down. You are awfully white. How do you feel?"

"Feel pretty well," said Harry, growing laconic, merely because she was. "Last few days hard on you, no doubt."

"Oh, terribly. I have got the megrims. That is the way grandma would express it. I am packing up. Papa is to come for me, you know. He would have come several days ago, only I put him off. Someway I could not get over the idea that Miss Margaret might want me, and come here to look for me. If she came, I could not bear that she should find me gone."

"And yet they say that women do not make faithful friends?"

"Who says it," cried Jeanne, putting up her head like an angry sparrow. "Any one whose opinion is worth anything? I once heard a man say he would not stay an hour in a town that had a woman for a mayor. He was a dirty little Hungarian, who knew as little about paying his debts as he did about the bath tub. He was so disagreeable that his wife had to leave him and so disgusting that no one could work in the same office with him."

"Yes," said Harry, very much amused, "I think myself that the men who are so eloquent on the inability of women are generally the most irremediable failures themselves. Have you any idea—

for I value a woman's opinion—that Margaret is in the city?"

"No, I haven't," said Jeanne, thoughtfully. "I think if she had been in the city she would have let me know. But anyway, I think she would leave as early as possible."

"Do you suppose the judge would have his wits about him?"

"Oh! do not speak of him," cried Jeanne, putting a minute bit of muslin up to her eyes, "I hudders when I think of her being alone with that monster! At night I dream that she is dead—killed. How can we tell where he might take her to, or what he might do? That is what gives me the megrims, you know," with a sudden smile breaking out.

"I don't believe anything could give them to you very long, could it?"

"Not very," Jeanne confessed. "There are times when I think that my way of being pleased all the time—or almost all the time—is actually coarse. But Miss Margaret liked it. She said it was worth the price of admission just to see me smile. She called me her patent smiler. And now, where is she, Mr. Leiter?" The tears followed close on the heels of the last smile.

"I should have thought the smiles beautiful anyway, Miss Whitfield, but I am bound to do so now that Margaret did," said Harry, ignoring the tears for diplomatic reasons that every man will understand.

"Mr. Leiter," said Jeanne suddenly, growing a little white about the mouth, "I want to know if you are going back on Mr. Pond."

"Going back on him? What do you mean? Why should I?"

"He thinks you and he can never be friends again now."

"Well, it is quite true, Miss Whitfield, that he did promise me that he would not betray the judge. We held that knowledge in common, and he swore to me that it should not be made public."

"But it was to save your life. Don't you see? He would never have broken his word, otherwise. You know he never would, Mr. Leiter."

"Well, certainly, I shall always count him my friend. I know how devoted he was. Yet I think the temptation to do a brilliant piece of newspaper work brought about the exposure as much as any desire to help me. And yet, do not imagine that I underestimate his kindness. But for him Margaret might be safe now."

"With you under sentence of death, and with her living in the house with her mad father? I think she would have been in a worse way than she is now."

"Perhaps she would—if it could be worse. Do you think I shall ever have her back again?"

"I am sure of it. I—I feel it in my bones, Mr. Leiter."

"I hope your bones are prophetic," said Harry, with a look of wistfulness. "I have no such pleasant inward assurance."

"I'm not a prophet myself. I have heard that women never are."

"Oh! There's Mother Shipton and Cassandra."

"They are not very well authenticated, are they?"

"Nothing is, that happened yesterday. I have heard it said that it was possible to prove that Napoleon Bonaparte never existed."

"I wish it were possible to prove that I am right about Margaret."

"I have got to prove it some way. This is my work now. My occupations are gone now, and I will devote my time to finding my poor girl."

"What are you going to do with your house?"

"With uncle's house? It is mine, I suppose. I shall sell it. I could not stand it to live in those dear rooms now. They are ruined for me. I should see that terrible figure whenever I entered the beautiful old music room. You never saw it, Miss Whitfield? You ought to. I shall give the violins to an old collector who has grown sour envying uncle the possession of them. He has offered fortunes for them, but I will surprise him by making him a present of them. It will more than likely kill him. He is subject to apoplexy."

"You will get your revenge and be generous at the same time."

"Precisely. I have found a purchaser for the old house, and most of the furniture goes with it."

"What a pity it seems!"

"Doesn't it? But I could not live among those things. If ever happy days come to me again, they

must be spent far away from here, in a new, bright home. I shall miss the old rich associations. But I must have my household goods fresh and pure—not with the memory of terrible deeds upon them."

"Yes," cried the little damsel, furnishing Margaret's home in her mind's eye, "you must have flowers, and clean curtains, and wood floors, and—"

"That is it; you grasp the idea exactly. And pictures of pleasant places, and statuettes of happy gods and people—none with the old tragedies upon them. No dying gladiators, no Ophelias, no Othellos, no mourning Sapphos. Only Mercury and Pan, and Rosalind, and Eros—"

"I am sure he is no giver of happiness. If any one has the shadow of the tragedies upon him, he has."

"Eh, you are not serious? Well, it's none of my business—but you know I want to help you in everything I can. Of course I do not need to say that, do I? Is there anything I can do for you?"

"Do? No. There is nothing the matter with me. I suppose I can make an abstract remark, as Mr. Pond would say."

"Does Pond come here much?"

"N—no; not very much." Jeanne turned her attention once more to the fashion plates, which were not all taken down yet. "I shall see nothing of him now, for I am going home."

"Do you live in an impregnable castle, then, may I ask?"

"I live in a funny farm house. Pa has painted it a pale pink. I mean Mr. Pond will never come out that far."

"No, I suppose a man used to racing over the continent as he is, will not be able to make a trip of five or six miles."

"What will Mr. Pond come out to a dull farm-house for? I cannot imagine him making such an effort. Why do we talk about it at all? You must think me very familiar for a stranger, Mr. Leiter."

"Our acquaintance has been cemented by too many sorrows—common sorrows—for us to be strangers. I have heard a great deal about you, and if anything could make me happy now, or lift this load that I am conscious of day and night, it would be meeting you."

"You are ever and ever so kind to say so, and I believe you mean it. We will both be happier sometime."

"We must pass through deep waters first, then. But I forget that these troubles touch you only remotely, and that your friendship all comes from your kindness of heart, merely."

"We all love Margaret," said the little damsel softly. "That is the bond." She looked very dainty indeed as she stood there, flushed with feeling and a trifle tremulous about the lips. Her dress of red-brown shaded into her more brilliant hair. Her transparent skin was as fair to look at as the rose with the dew on it. Her lashes, moist with tender drops, revealed, yet concealed, her friendly

eyes. Looking at her so, Harry said that she stood for whatever was womanly, unselfish, true and homelike.

Just then there was a knock at the door.

"Come," cried Jeanne. It was Pond who responded.

"I beg pardon," he said. No one had the grace to make a reply. Jeanne flushed scarlet, now, and Harry had some trouble in stammering out a "Glad to see you."

But the apprehensive eyes of the little damsel noticed that they did not shake hands.

"I owe you a great debt," said Harry stiffly. "I ought to have written; but it is not easy to thank a man for doing what you did for me."

"I can see very well that you think I was not disinterested. Well, then, I was. But you will know about that some day. And then, I suppose you will think worse of me than ever."

"Think worse of you! Are you trying to pick a quarrel, Pond? What should I have against you?"

"Well, I kept you from being a martyr. That is hard to forgive, I should imagine."

"Now you are together," broke in Jeanne, finding her tongue and her tact, "why don't you talk about the best way to find Margaret?"

"Sure enough," cried Pond, looking at her with thankful eyes, "that would be more like it. Ask us to sit down, Miss Whitfield. We must begin some concerted action."

"By to-morrow or the next day," said Harry, taking the chair set for him, "my business affairs will be brought to an end. The house, the horses, the furniture and all the rest will be sold, and I shall be free to wander where I will. From that time on I will devote myself to my melancholy search, Mr. Pond." Dennis looked up sharply at the "Mister," but said nothing.

Then they talked for an hour, but, as Jeanne remarked to herself after they left, they did not seem to arrive at very much.

"That is a jewel—that little girl," said Harry to Pond, with the first really cordial tone he had used.

"She is that," replied Pond. "Odd that I do not fall in love with her, isn't it?"

CHAPTER XXIII.

The traveler is apt to stumble upon tiny villages anywhere upon the Illinois prairie. It is difficult to determine what excuse for existence these little hamlets have, unless it is to supply a postoffice, and thus apologize for our great system of inconvenience known as our postal service.

Less than fifty miles from Chicago is such a place, known by the name of Hawthorne. It had no manufactories, few enterprises, no competition--and the postoffice.

In the midst of one of the grassy streets of this friendly hamlet had stood for several years, a deserted smithy. The horses of the neighboring farmers were shod at a brisk place down the West road, and no enterprise of a competitive nature was started. Hawthorne was not a little surprised, therefore, when it became aware one morning that a genial glow from the old forge lit up the cobwebby interior, and the resonant clang of the anvil was breaking the quiet of the morning.

Close upon this discovery came Will Windom, the urbane and plethoric "real estate dealer" of the place, who gave it forth at every door that the day before, a strange old man had visited his place and purchased the old smithy "for clean spot cash." This last announcement alone was calculated to arouse public amazement. To what a degree, then,

was it agitated when the daughter of the old blacksmith was seen going from place to place purchasing the necessities for housekeeping. So many things had not been sold in the town in one day for many a long month. There were apartments above the smithy and these were selected by the daughter as the best living rooms to be had for the price in town. Low, large and melancholy, they had a peculiar, not easily defined charm, especially on a day when the tender spring rain came falling with musical resonance upon the roof, as it did on this day.

When she had put matting down on the floors of the room, and had the walls—which were ceiled—gone over with a new coat of paint, and put flowers at the windows, with some light muslin hangings, the old place became quite transformed. She found part of a set of quaint blue dishes and had them put in a cabinet that the furniture dealer had despaired of ever selling, and she laid in a good store of linen, which was the one thing the housewives admired her for. But once settled, she seemed to care little for keeping the house up, and general disapproval spread about the neighborhood when she hired a woman to do the work for her, while she sat for the most part in the blacksmith shop with her father.

Now a blacksmith shop is the place of all places for men to congregate, and is certainly no place for a young girl, even though she bear herself with the greatest discretion. But not at all did the

smith's daughter mind the criticisms passed upon her, although they were brought to her immediately by the stalwart assistant, Peter Ford.

The gentle way in which she thanked him for every favor, and a certain regardful interest she seemed to take in him, touched him deeply. She was not loud of voice like the other girls of the village, and though she did not look so pretty as they did, with their elaborate overskirts and beribboned hats, she had an eye which pierced him through and through with a sort of pain as he had never felt before. He defended her from the intrusions of the other girls who were anxious to visit her, and to talk her over, and he tried with his simple stories to help her pass the evenings, which he spent before the forge, with her father and herself.

"What is your first name?" he asked one evening. "I only hear your father call you daughter."

No answer came at first. Instead of replying the smith's daughter colored a painful red, and avoided his glance. Poor Peter was overjoyed at this confusion, and set it down to embarrassment at the familiarity of his question.

"My name is Margaret," she said at length, "but I do not like to be called by it."

"Ye don't!" cried the young fellow heartily, slapping his thigh with a loud laugh. "Well, I think that is as fine a name as ye could find if ye picked't out yerself."

"Father does not call me that any more."

"He makes a mistake. Why not let me call ye Meg—or Mag. I ain't no hand at putting on airs."

"Call me Meg if you like. But do not be surprised if I do not always answer at once. I am not used to the name."

After that the girl at the shop was known as Meg Farrier, but her father was seldom referred to in any other manner than "Old Man Farrier," an expression which he never resented, but seemed to actually derive some amusement from.

Sunday the smith and his daughter appeared at church, clad in some new garments that they had purchased the day before at the Hawthorne dry goods store. These garments did not show the aspirations that distinguished the rest of the inhabitants. Silently the two—father and daughter—entered, and contrary to the custom of the church, they knelt side by side for a few moments upon entering, and prayed together, with her hand in his. At the close of the service, to which they listened attentively, they went out without stopping to salute their neighbors, as was the habit of the rest, and those who looked closely saw that the old man was trembling and weeping.

Immediately great hopes were entertained of a conversion, that should afford legitimate theme for church talk for a time to come, but the hopes entertained were crushed when the quiet of the Sabbath was broken by the blows of the old man's hammer in the smithy. Labor was not thought too much of at any time in Hawthorne, and on Sunday

it was deemed a crowning sin. Never before in the history of the place had any one so deliberately offended in this particular, and after the work had gone vigorously on for some time, a deacon of the church was delegated to go to the smithy and remonstrate with its new tenant.

Deacon Melton had grown old in the service of the church and its observances. But there was certainly every authority for the sinfulness of work on Sunday, and he accepted his errand with eagerness.

The front door of the smithy was closed and locked, and though he knocked repeatedly, he could not make himself heard above the terrible clangor inside. So the deacon picked his way carefully through the spring mud to the rear of the shop. The back door was also closed, but it yielded to Deacon Melton's efforts, and opened.

What the deacon saw then he will never forget, though he would willingly do so. The fire was glowing fiercely and in the full sweep of its red illumination was the old man, swinging his hammer with prodigious movements. Those arms were strong, but not the arms of a blacksmith. The cords stood out in them, but it was from the unwonted straining to which they were being subjected, and not from muscular development. And in their gestures was a sort of frenzy that amazed and dismayed the deacon for they wrought no work, they merely dashing the resounding implement aginst the glowing iron, without prdoucing any recognizable thing. As the smith raised his eyes at

the opening of the door, the deacon saw depicted upon his face, a suffering so acute and an impatience so intense, that he lost heart and feared to enter. The eyes the smith fixed upon him had no recognition in them; indeed, the deacon has since said, they had no humanity.

"I killed a coyote once out west," the deacon is wont to say in speaking of it, "an' when he died he had just such a look in his eyes. It was an animal look, you know, but it had a sort of horror in it, too."

The smith did not stop for the approach of the deacon, but went on swinging his hammer with terrible force, regardless of where it struck or what it accomplished. To get within reach of that sweeping hammer was a dangerous thing, and the look in the smith's eyes was not inviting. Fascinated, the deacon closed the door behind him and stood silently in the corner, with staring gaze upon the wild old man. After a time it seemed to him that the blows grew weaker. Then he was certain that the arms were wavering. Finally they trembled convulsively, dropped the huge hammer and fell to the smith's sides. Then the old man raised a changed face. It was haggard, worn—and very humble.

"Saved," he said to himself.

Then from out the shadows at the far end came his daughter. She was as pale as death, and something more than ordinary fear shone in her large eyes, which wore an unnatural aspect to the bewil-

dered deacon. She held out her arms to her father and he fell in them, sobbing like a grieved child.

Tenderly, with soothing words, and many pattings of the hand and caressing touches, the daughter led him up the narrow stairs that led to the apartments above, and as they went the old man still murmured, "saved," until they were out of hearing.

Then the deacon stole away and told the story to every one he saw.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Quiet and very dull seemed the paternal nest to the little damsel. Her fine clothes were sadly out of place, and mocked her with their inappropriate elegance, the daily round, so familiar and so tedious, was especially hateful now. For the heart of the little damsel was disturbed, and at such times it is difficult for a maiden to dwell in patience under the roof—and the eye—of those in authority over her.

In natural women when the heart is stirred, the home making instinct is also aroused. Birds are the same way. Then the paternal home grows distasteful. The labors performed there are graceless tasks, the days spent there, impatient ones.

Yet Jeanne loved her home—every inch of it. Just to follow her mother about the house was a pleasure. The chickens, the dogs, the blind cat, the cows and each of the horses greeted her after their manner. The little bare room welcomed her with its silent familiarity. Its uncarpeted floor, its chilly little windows, its narrow bed with the pieced calico cover, were in violent contrast to the comforts she had grown used to in the last several weeks. But they gave her a sense of rest. As she nestled at night in the bed and curled herself up in a ball, as she had done so many hundred times in the old days, she almost persuaded herself that

she had suffered no change, and that her heart was as light as ever it had been. Such, however, was not the case. Jeanne did not sleep well, and that, in a healthy girl, is a sure sign of mental distress. The Jeanne of the old time would never have lain through the greater part of the night watching the shifting shaft of moonlight on the floor. The Jeanne of the old time did not know the sad plaint of Gretchen:

"My life is empty, my heart is sore.
He has left me—he has left me forever more."

And she would have had no patience with it if she had.

There were a great many vanities in the Jeanne of the present time that the old Jeanne would have laughed at. This Jeanne spent twenty minutes a day manicuring her finger nails, she tied her red curls in a bewitching Grecian knot, and she used heliotrope on her handkerchief. Yet her mother found her as helpful as of old, and much more sympathetic. The young friends on the neighboring farms who came to welcome Jeanne home seemed very coarse now to the poor little damsel. She cared nothing for the matters they talked of, and their jests out of which she had once drawn infinite amusement, were most offensive now. At another time she might have enjoyed them, even by the light of her wider experience, for she was nothing if not humorous. But the truly humorous person has as great a capacity for tears as for laughter, and now Jeanne found the tears uppermost. Not that they ever fell, but that they lay near the surface.

One night this misery reached the climax. It was raining drearily, and as all at the farm house went to bed soon after supper, Jeanne had gone tc her room. Its bareness had never been more repellant. Even the prints lately pinned on the wall and the bright curtains and the warm rug, could not make it look inhabited. On the window the rain swept drearily and echoed through the half furnished house. Jeanne laid down the book to revel in its deep plaintiveness, and sitting with clasped hands stared before her. She crooned a little song—"The Long, Long, dreary Day," with pathos that compelled a strong self pity and was just dragging the lachrymose end of the second verse, when she was startled by a resounding knock on the seldom-used front door.

There was no one up but Jeanne, and once abed, the good farmer folk heard nothing till morning, when they awoke with the regularity of clock-work. Jeanne lit a candle and made her way, not without trepidation, to the front door. The little vestibule smelled horribly of oilcloth, and the key stuck so that it was necessary for her to put the candle on the floor to use both hands to turn it.

At length it came open with a jerk, and, as might be expected, the candle went out as the wind came in. Here, then, was confusion. A tall figure loomed up before her there in the dark—a figure with bright eyes, which peered through the gloom at the frightened girl.

"Is this Miss Jeanne?"

Was it Miss Jeanne? It was anything that voice wanted it to be.

"It is Jeanne," said that small person, and then added with ready deception, "who is it that is speaking? The candle went out."

"Yes, I see," returned the voice, "or rather I don't see. Who is it? Well, if you don't know by this time, I may as well go back as I came."

"Oh, its Mr. Pond!" cried the perjured Jeanne, in accents of great surprise. "Come in quick, out of the rain. How in the world did you get out here?"

"I walked three miles from the station. How do other people not blessed with chaises get out here?"

So dark was it going through the vestibule, and the cold little parlor, that Jeanne had to guide her caller by the hand, lest he should fall over something and injure his ankles. And so long was the parlor—though Jeanne had never noticed it before—that it took a long, long time to get through it. It was full fifteen miuntes at the least, before the kitchen was reached. There is no accounting for these things. It took the children of Israel forty years to cross a patch of ground that a Yankee would have traversed in a week's comfortable walking.

"I never dreamed that you would come."

Considering the state of his clothes, drenched with wet as they were, there was every likelihood that she would catch cold.

"So you never dreamed of it? I have dreamed of nothing else."

"Why didn't you wait for pleasant weather?"

"Why do you not select a dryer knee to sit on?"

"But there is no dryer knee here."

"There was no pleasanter weather here."

As the fire was very low indeed, it was necessary to put on a few sticks of wood. It was not in reason that Pond could go to bed till his clothes were dried. When he finally sat with his feet in the oven, and watched by the light of the kerosene lamp the busy figure of the little damsel, making coffee, cutting bread and hunting doughnuts in a great crock, there was a look of placidity on his face such as his mirror had not seen since he first met Margaret.

He thought of Margaret even now, while he watched Jeanne, but not with longing. Far off and beautiful he felt her radiance as he would that of a star. He knew that had he possessed the right to love her, and had he won her love, she could never have given him the unquestioning devotion that this little girl could. There was something much more human about his feeling for Jeanne than there had ever been in his worship of Margaret. He longed to call her to him and wrap his arms about her. It seemed to him that earth could hold no greater comfort than to have her odd little head lying on his shoulder. Moved by an impulse stronger than his will he stretched out his arms to her.

"You are my little wife," he said with swimming eyes. "Is it not so?"

Ah! It was so. It was indeed. His forever, by

every emotion that dedicates the heart, the reason, and the life of woman to that of man.

"This is the most remarkable meal of my life," he said a little later. "I can hardly realize that I am the Bohemian devoted to crabs and beer, eaten in the company of a lot of homeless fellows like myself."

He wiped his mustache carefully and elaborately, by passing one arm around her waist.

"I used to eat half my supper standing up," he went on when this operation had been successfully performed. "I usually have supper at 12, you know. I have been to the same place for several months, and it was that I might watch a certain person."

He stopped to take a bite of doughnut.

"Who was he?" cried Jeanne, flushing.

Pond regarded her with delighted eyes. Her remarks struck him as being one of the most piquant compliments he had ever received.

"It was a man with a 'cello."

"Why did you watch him?"

"To see if he would miss coming. He never did; so I found it dreary. The object in life—and it was all I have—was hardly large enough for my needs."

"You concluded to amuse yourself in other ways," interrogated a small voice.

"I did. I have come here for selfish reasons only."

"That makes no difference to me," burst out Jeanne, "so long as—" then she stopped and turned scarlet.

"So long as what? No mystery! So long as what?"

"So long as you are here," faltered Jeanne.

Doughnuts and kisses are a queer combination, but any one who has tried them will find that they are not so bad.

"What were you doing to-night when I came?"

"Thinking of you. I have not been able to sleep much lately—for thinking of you."

"So? Well, to tell the truth, I haven't been sleeping particularly well myself. I tried to think it was indigestion, but it wasn't."

"I am so glad it wasn't," said Jeanne.

"I say, little girl," broke in Pond suddenly. "I hope you are not thinking that I am an angel or a hero, or anything of that sort. I have not been true to my best ideas. I am not worthy of the least of your regards, if the truth were told. Perhaps you may realize it some day—and that would be terrible, after you had believed in me so. I had rather tell you now."

"I do not know what you are talking about," said Jeanne, lifting up trusting eyes. "I only know that I can never be happy away from you again, and that as you came I was just thinking that I had better be dead, since I was not to see you again."

"God help me, Jeanne, God help me! Put your arms around my neck and look in my eyes without blushing, while I call you my wife. So, good night. In the morning we will see if I am to be welcomed."

Never before in his life had he slept in a room so bare, so cheerless and so chilly as the one that

Jeanne took him to, and yet, oddly enough, never before had he slept with such a sense of perfect happiness and joy. Peace he had felt before; but peace may be a dull thing. It is far from being gladness.

The next morning as Mrs. Whitfield was placidly getting breakfast she was not a little startled by the apparition of a young man in elegant garments—or what seemed to Mrs. Whitfield to be so—who opened the stairway door and greeted her with a broad smile. Mrs. Whitfield, with pancake-turner raised in air, regarded him in speechless astonishment.

"I dare say," he began in a hearty voice, "that you are not accustomed to having young men walk unannounced from your upper apartments, Mrs. Whitfield, especially young men whom you have never seen before. Under ordinary circumstances, I would myself think that such an occurrence would call for an apology. But at present I have an offense so much larger to apologize for that I do not care to use up any credit I may have on small matters. Madam, I am Dennis Pond."

"You don't say," said Mrs. Whitfield with ready cordiality. "Well, you are welcome. I have heard Jeanne speak of you often. Did you come out in the rain last night?"

"To the best of my belief, I did. And the reason that I came in such a storm, Mrs. Whitfield, was because I came after your daughter."

"Not after Jeanne?"

"After Jeanne. I know that you have several other daughters, but they are all too small as yet to pay any attention to me."

"What did Jeanne say?" asked her mother, with a ring of nameless jealousy in it, that a mother's voice can assume on such occasions.

"Jeanne said, madam—just what I would have her say. She will tell you herself. Where is she?'

"Dressing the children. That is her job mornings. Sit down, Mr. Pond. Pa will be in after a bit. He is out at the barn."

"Supposing I go to the barn," said Pond. "I might find—pa—there."

"Just so," said Jeanne's mother, with a sympathetic smile. But, after Pond was gone, the tears trickled into the pancake batter.

A little later "Pa" came in with Pond at his heels. His eyes were smiling, though his lips trembled.

"Ma," he said, "I guess this young fellow ken take keer of a wife. What d'ye think?"

"I think what you think, pa," said ma.

Pond turned away then, for he saw that they both wanted a chance to wipe their eyes unobserved. His own were full to the brim, but he would not speak, for he felt instinctively how they would dislike any protestations.

"He says he ken turn four thousand a year," went on pa, trying to appear calculating. "Thet ought to take care of daughtie."

"She's bin eginomical brought up," said ma.

Just then the door opened. In it stood Jeanne, leading a child on one side and carrying a tiny boy on the other. Pa and ma looked at her anxiously.

"Has he told you?" she asked, with her old childish way of going to the heart of a matter at once.

"God bless you, daughtie," said pa.

"Yes," acquiesced ma, referring to the blessing.

"My Madonna," whispered Pond, taking baby from her arms and kissing it.

The next pancake that was turned missed and fell to the floor.

CHAPTER XXV.

There are strange insects that are born to a double life, and to which it is given to know the world under two conditions. Margaret felt now as though she had passed through her new chrysalis and become a new creature. All the conditions that surrounded her former life had been swept entirely away, or they might as well have been, for all she knew of them. A sad gray life, filled with duty.

There came across Margaret at times a wild restlessness. She could not account for it, and did not even know by what name to call it. It was the same sort of feeling that drives men to sea, or into foreign war, or up to the desolate north seas, or to the source of the Nile. But women have no outlet for their sufferings, such as these, and there was nothing for her to do but get through the long, dead days in patience—and, of all the virtues, patience is the most difficult and the least inspiring.

And then, night and day, she watched her father. She never let him from her sight. Every morning she aroused him early, and the two of them, with rake and shovel, gardened in the back yard till breakfast. Throughout the morning he toiled in the blacksmith shop, and she sat near with her sewing, ready to talk or sing, whenever he grew melancholy or restless. In the afternoon they walked over the quiet country roads together. After din-

ner—they dined at night, to the astonishment of their neighbors, who had never heard of such a thing—they read together, and closed the evening with prayer.

"Keep us from temptation," Margaret would repeat, while on her arm lay the quivering hand of her father.

"Keep us from temptation and the devils of our worser selves," he would add.

One day the deep depression he was subject to settled down upon him like a murky cloud. Margaret talked of all the things that he was usually most interested in. She begged him to walk out with her, but he refused over and over.

"I will not go," he cried. "Leave me alone! I know what is best for me. I cannot go out."

"Not with me?" Margaret pleaded. "We will go down that quiet lane that leads north toward the oak woods. No one will see us."

"I would not go for worlds," he protested, shaking with some emotion that Margaret could not fathom.

"Come out in the garden, then," she urged, "we have not got half those lettuce seeds in yet. We will work there, and the smell of the earth will make you sleepy. You will grow tired, and then you can lie down and rest quietly."

"Macbeth hath murdered sleep," he repeated, absently.

"Don't be elocutionary, papa," said Margaret, trying to laugh at him.

But he turned a hollow eye on her and sadly shook his head.

"I cannot be merry, Margaret," he said. "There is something tugging at my throat and at my heart that makes me think I shall soon be mad."

"Not in the old way, papa? Dear heart, surely not in the old way?"

"How else?" he cried, covering his eyes with his hands.

"But papa, let me prove to you 'tis not the old way. Then, you were anxious to conceal all the workings of your mind; now you confide them to me. So you see your mental condition cannot be the same. You are naturally disturbed, you are lonesome and discouraged—but nothing else, papa —nothing else!"

It was almost noon, and the brawny assistant was out. The judge walked back and forth down the long smithy. His face looked cold and still. The look of weakness that Margaret had sometimes noticed in it was quite gone, and it wore an aspect of dignified decision. Looking at him with her love in her eyes, she thought she could see this feeling intensify moment by moment.

"He is conquering," she told herself. "He will be the better for the struggle, and when once he has conquered his mood, he may never be troubled again."

Backward and forward he went, minute after minute. The maid called, in her nasal voice, that dinner was ready, and later volunteered the informa-

tion that the steak was growing cold, but the judge did not hear her at all, and Margaret only replied with a gesture commanding silence.

Outside was the soughing of the strong spring wind, and the trees lashed against the sides of the building with impotent frenzy. The forge felt the spasms of wind and responded with sudden spirals of flame and whiffs of ashes. The dark walls sheltered legions of shadows, and the piles of old iron and the rusty accumulations of years that lay in the corners, took to themselves mysterious shapes. The cobwebs swung heavily from the low roof, and the judge, still walking back and forth, occasionally raised his eyes to them, as if there was something in their motion that interested him.

"I feel better," he said suddenly, ceasing in his walk, and turning a set face on Margaret, "I think I will go to my room awhile and write. You are a sweet daughter, my girl, I want to assure you now that you did all for me that you could. I think hardly any other woman lives who would have done what you have for a wretch like me. I have thanked heaven in my miserable prayers a hundred times a day for your mercies—for your loyal heart. I would like to kiss you, but there are reasons why I will not. I think I shall be able to sleep awhile, but you need not keep the shop still. The noise will not disturb me. Just leave me in peace, and if I do not come out for supper, know that I have—have fallen asleep. In the morning I will be bet-

ter. Send Peter to wake me then in case I am not up for breakfast. God bless you!"

He stood for several moments, looking at her irresolutely—not that the aspect of set determination ever left his face, but that yearning tenderness showed through it, and he appeared to be fighting with himself against leaving her without a caress. Margaret simply sat still and looked at him. There was something so strange about his manner that she hardly dared to reply, lest she should vex him, and bring back that horrible restlessness again. There were times when a word would disturb his mental balance. As he turned on the steep stairs to look back at her, she thought his glance had more of the frankness of the old happy days in it than she had seen for a long while. The furtive look that had caused her such misery of heart was gone, and the soul looking out of the dark eyes was the soul of a man.

She threw him a kiss from the tips of her fingers, and when he had closed his room-door, she went up to her solitary dinner. She spent the afternoon beside Peter before the forge. That amiable giant worked away with a will, making a show of his great arms, and adding many unnecessary flourishes to his work. Every now and again he paused to express his views upon some matter and to receive Margaret's in return.

Just then there was a fall that shook the old structure. Margaret started up with a terrible fear in her face.

"It is father," she cried. "Run, Peter, and take your hammer with you! You may have to break in the door. Quick, for God's sake!"

Her ringing voice inspired Peter with alacrity. He dashed up the stairs, down the long, bare hall above, tried the door of the judge's room, found it bolted, raised the hammer with a mighty swing, and crashed the frail wood to fragments.

Close behind was Margaret. When the door fell she started aside and hid her eyes.

"You look in, Peter," she whispered. "Look, and tell me what you see."

But Peter did not reply. He looked, indeed, then he reeled, caught himself, and staggered to an open window, making, meanwhile, wild motions for Margaret to come away, but unable to get a sound out of his throat. Margaret paid no attention to his importunities. She clasped her hands behind her, put her teeth together and entered the room. The sight that met her expectant look was what she thought it would be. On the floor lay her father, and from his throat gushed a stream of blood. It stained his clothes and white beard and formed tiny pools on the matting. But death was not yet in that room; there was something much worse there—madness; like a maniac the old man tore at his throat and raised his bloody fingers where he could see them. The muffled choking that issued from his throat contained an inarticulate note that sounded like exultation, and as a miser dies with his hands in the precious gold he has sold his soul

to get, so the judge died with his hands dabbling in the blood, which was none the less gratification to his hideous caprice, because it was his own.

To be sure, Margaret seized those hands and tried to hold them free of the enveloping crimson, but she could not withstand his frenzied strength. She called to Peter to go for aid, but the giant had a failing that even giants are not always exempt from. He could not stand the sight of blood, and he sat on the window ledge, trying in vain to overcome the deadly sickness at his heart.

A few horrible gasps—noisy gasps—a few gross contortions, and spittings and gestures, frightfully animal in their nature, and Judge Barthwait, the most distinguished judge upon the western bench, lay dead by his own hand.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A carefully bound book it was, with cover of Russian leather, and fashionable dentile pages, and a series of bands for the pencil. The point of the pencil was inclosed in a silver case, to protcet it when carried in the pocket. So dainty, so conventional was it, that it might have been taken for the recipient of a lady's confidences. One would expect to find some memoranda in it, a few quotations of the elusive sort, a list of addresses, and some critical remarks about intimate friends.

Margaret, who sat alone in her room by a flickering light, found none of these things in it. It had laid over her father's heart. All that was left of her father now was out in the bare little graveyard on the hill, along with a hundred simple folk, who had lived stupidly and died in comparative innocence. It was two days since Margaret had stood by the open grave and listened to the hollow fall of the dirt on the coffin. Those two days had been spent pacing the long, silent smithy, the doors of which were fast barred now.

Something had told her, when she found the notebook, to put it where strange eyes would not encounter it. It had fallen from her father's pocket when—when he fell. She opened it without dread, however, and as the silent evening deepened, read its closely written pages.

It bore the date of the first day of the new year.

"There is no throb in time because of the birth of a new year," it began. "The years glide by with perfect smoothness, as though the flight of time signified nothing. And, indeed, I believe that it amounts to little enough. Time, space, man, are trifles. Each year I am more persuaded of that. It matters little what man does.

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"If it were not for Margaret, I think I should not care to live this year out. The very expansion of life is a pain to me. I think I understand, in the dim way that it is given to man to understand, a hundred things that I was once ignorant of. But this only brings additional suffering. I think I envy God. I think I should like to be a creator. There is nothing very proud in being a mere discoverer, or imitator, or elaborator. If I had made men I should not suffer as I do now, in trying to understand them. What a panorama of misery has passed before me since I was young. The last few years have brought nothing but a succession of tragedies to my notice. Each day has its new misery. Murder, deceit, despair, anguish, hate, malice, revenge! What a carnival of passions, *en masque*, go trooping by me, hideously gamboling and never recognizing their own vileness. The secret of these crimes, still defies me, perplexes and piques.

"Did Judas want money? I think he did not care for money. What made the deep treachery in

his soul? He had no reason for hatred. Was vice born in him? He had never given any previous demonstration of it. Was his crime to an extent experimental? More likely—far more likely.

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"I cannot help but notice at times how easily a man will endure the word murderer when applied to himself. He would start at the word 'thief.' He would leap at the throat of a man who called him a 'liar.' Men do not seem to be ashamed of blood shedding as of other crimes. Another thing I have noticed, is that many of the worst murders committed, seem to have no reason for being. But I have said all this to myself and written it in this book a thousand times—I should say, in the books finished and put away. I forgot that this is a new year and a new record. If this record is as puerile as the last two, I shall have reason to be ashamed of it. I am a very amateurish writer, and I often think my thoughts lose not a little by being transmitted to paper.

"I keep thinking of that little woman who is up for having butchered her husband. She looks as though her eyes were bent on heaven, her knees made for her children to pray at, her lips for wifely kisses and motherly prayers. Yet she cut off her husband's head with an ax! What is stranger still, she suffers no apparent remorse. I asked her why she did it. She said they differed about the new minister. I asked her what she had been doing all the morning before. (The crime was committed about noon.)

She told me she had been out helping to attend to the hogs. They had had a hog-killing that morning, and a butcher from town came to stick the animals.

"I have thought a great deal about this. Every one knows how brutal butchers look, and what dangerous men they are, having passions of the greatest fierceness. But I really think it is foolish to write all this down. My last book was full of it, and the subject ought to begin to grow tedious. I do not remember ever having been interested in a subject so long before. My library upon diseases of the will is becoming unique. I may be wrong to put so much money in it. I am anxious not to exhaust Margaret's little legacy. To be sure, there is plenty now, but—I am always afraid of trouble for Margaret. Dear girl! She is as tender as a fresh lily."

The next installment of ideas seemed to have been prompted by those that had gone before.

"One thing is certain: That woman would never have killed her husband if it had not been for that pig-sticking. There must be a distinct pleasure in the shedding of blood. The woman had never felt that pleasure before, and it intoxicated her. She killed her husband because her affection ceased to operate when her dementia began. Still, I may be wrong in considering her demented. But I cannot understand why she was not remorseful except by that hypothesis. The crime seemed a thing apart from herself. She regarded it from the stand-

point of the contemplator. I could not make her out. But I was not surprised that she was convicted.

"What is the secret of war, patriotism, or love of bloodshed?

"I have been consulting several doctors about this terrible insomnia. Sleep has come to seem the most precious thing of life to me. But I do not like to have Margaret know. Poor Margaret! She knows nothing of the wickedness of this world. I think she hardly knows there is such a thing as crime. I think she is beginning to love Harry Leiter. He is a magnificent lad, but I cannot say that I want him or any one else to have Margaret.

"I often wonder why she looks at me so sharply. She must be trying to read my thoughts. I have grown very suspicious of her. As a child, she showed no such tendency. I saw a terrible accident on the street to-day. A man was crushed by a piece of ice that fell from a ten-story building, and was picked up in bleeding fragments. I looked at him a long time. It is odd, but I seemed to have felt happier the rest of the afternoon. The destiny of man appeared so inevitable to me that I concluded we might as well take the first path that offered itself to us. We can only go as fate would have us go. Then, why not yield to our inclinations, even those we would not willingly put in words?

'Sometimes I wish Margaret would go to Europe to study for a while. She is certainly growing very inquisitive. I can see she is trying to find out

what I am thinking about. I have been reading in one of my recently purchased books of a girl of gentle and amiable disposition who was given to the killing of animals. She was accounted sane by the physicians. Evidently she would not have killed them, if she had not derived pleasure from it. Judgment should be very lenient when such criminals are brought up. I think the best prescription for them would be continuous and diverting work. They have to fight a natural tendency; they are not criminals, but unfortunates.

"I wonder if life were not meant to be accented by strange events. This placid continuity seems unnatural to me. My days are so much alike, that I hardly know when Sunday comes and Saturday goes. If my dear wife had not died, I think I would not have found it so difficult. I am moved at times to wonder if I might not find some new love that would give me pleasure. I sometimes esteem it unfortunate that I have a habitual chastity of thought and action. There is, no doubt, a great entertainer in the lighter loves of men of the world. But they are not for me. I should be remorseful—I have an idea that I should also be awkward. Of course, if one can sleep, one is not so restless. I have a vague desire at times to see a noble war in this country. If I could fight in a stalwart cause, I am sure life would become majestic again. War makes murder holy.

"The long days at the court are becoming almost unendurable. At night my brain is so fatigued

that I can do nothing but read. I fear my theories as I deliver them from the bench are becoming too noticeable. I imagine the clerk regards me with curiosity. He is a shallow fellow and I am sure he cannot understand half he hears. I am thinking of letting Margaret go away for a time. She is certainly in love with Leiter. I am glad of it—he is a dear lad. But he is very ill-bred in some ways. He scrutinizes every one too closely.

"It is six nights since I have slept quietly. Once I fell asleep for a time, but it was only to feverishly dream. I dreamed I was in Texas in a strange building far from other habitations. With me were three men, chance travelers like myself, who had stopped there for shelter from the beating sun.

"The plains stretched out before us, dry, sweltering, under a yellow sky. The sun seemed to spread over the whole heaven; its palpable radiations reached to the horizon on every side. Not a tree or a pool of water, or a hollow that could nurse a shadow appeared. Every one of us in that room hated each other without knowing why. I looked at them with eyes of insolence and loathing, and they returned those glances. Suddenly one of them said the room was too small for us all.

"I agreed with him. But I told him that I was the one that would remain. Then we flew at each other's throats. But they fought together—there were three against one. I was glad of it. I rejoiced that I should have so much more cause for hatred—though hatred needs no cause. At first I

felt only the fierce joy of fighting, but at a lucky turn, my knife slit up the heart of one of them. Then came an intoxication such as I had never dreamed of. A red mist swam before my eyes—no not a mist—a beautiful flame that rolled in sheets. My veins were thrilled. I felt a passionate thirst. It seemed to me as if my happiness would be complete if I could only lay my parched lips at the dripping throat of one of them and drink the hot gush that came from it. I slew another of them and then the third, and just as I was about to kneel and gratify my consuming desire, I awoke.

"To-morrow we—Margaret and I—dine with dear old Henry Leiter. I look forward to the visit with pleasure. Like a brook of pure water in an arid place, is he to my soul. How far from thoughts of strife and misery is that serene spirit! Living apart from the rest of the world as he does, with his beloved instruments, his boy and his books, he seems to me almost like a saint, cloistered in peaceful quietude.

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"If it had not been for the stiletto it might not have happened. But how contented I have felt since. And how I have slept! The parrot was a foolish toy. I knew that no one would mind if it were gone. But really, I should never have thought of it if she had not played with the knife so near it. Who can help the association of ideas? It felt very much as I thought it would. There was

the warm throbbing, the crimson outpouring that I expected. It gave me a feeling of power. True I could not create, like God, but I could kill and undo the work of God. No one knows how strange I felt—how full of life.

"Then there was the rabbit. He had a great deal more blood in him, and he was harder to kill. But what was the use of letting such a joy grow cold? Why not repeat it often? The rake tore through him with a straining sound. He lived wonderfully long. I thought he would never die—but I was glad he was long about it.

"They never guessed what I stole back to the conservatory for, I am persuaded. Of course they were a prying set, but I outwitted them. The house was horribly hot when I got home. The sleeplessness had come back—though I was happy, and that made it easier. Margaret said some strange things when we were coming home. The remembrance of them took me to her room. She was sound asleep and she looked perfectly innocent. I have an idea that she promised to be Harry's wife that night.

"If I really thought she was suspicious, I—but I went out. The restlessness was returning and I had to conquer it at any price. I found a saloon still open, and I got a drink. It is a cursed infirmity that I can drink no more than a girl. It did not help my thirst either. When I first looked up, I found myself in front of Leiter's. What if they had already found the rabbit? I determined to find

out if I could. I crept to the veranda, and tried the windows. One was tight, but the other lifted easily. Once inside I closed it again and fastened it, for I was afraid they might suspect I had been in to see about the rabbit. The gas was burning, but I did not see until I was well in the room, that Henry Leiter was watching me in his large leather chair. He had set up to watch me. I saw that in his eyes, which were filled with fear as he looked at me, and his face that was so pale at not having been found out. There had to be an end of his surveillance. Harry's knife was there. I knew it was Harry's and I determined that he ought to be punished for the way he looked at me when I came out of the conservatory. So I used it. It was a pity that Leiter had to be sacrificed! We had been good friends—but I could not have him spying. It did not take long to do all I wanted. He was as easy to manage as a child, and I never saw such red blood. It was beautiful. For the sake of our old friendship, I marked him with that glowing liquid. He looked like a victor dressed for death. Death! He is dead, sure enough. It is hard for me to remember it; but I could not have him babbling. Ah! the next hour! Shall I ever forget how long, how full it was! As I walked the streets I felt as if I was born to be mighty. Laws there might be for other men, but for me there was nothing but to do as I wished. Some men must pierce the secrets of life, and take stand with infinitude. I saw a thousand visions in

different lands, and I seemed to be floating while I saw them in a cloud of scarlet glory above earth. Yet in a way I participated in these visions, and knew the joy there was in life. I felt the joy of the Turk, the Arab, the Spaniard, the Italian, the mystic, the worshiper, the women of all times, the joy of the little children—I knew at last how to estimate the accumulated happiness of earth. But it suddenly occurred to me that Margaret might have been watching and that she was feigning sleep when I was in her room. If that was so, there was only one thing for it. It was a pity again, and I might miss her terribly, for Margaret is a sweet thing. Still I did not much doubt what I should have to do. I did not like to enter by the door, for fear that some one would see me. The trellis work above the porte cochere is easy to climb, and I did it like a schoolboy. She had not locked her window, foolish girl. Those who spy ought to take precautions. I got in without trouble. I knew where she lay, and there would have been no need of lighting the gas if I had not been unarmed. But I had dropped Harry's knife in the snow after I had left the front door, and so I had to light the gas. When I did I could find nothing. Margaret slept, or pretended to sleep, softly. I stood above her a long time. I wanted to kiss her—my dear. Her brown hair framed her tender face. It was not the face of one given to spying. I concluded to let the matter go till I had better proof—besides I should be so lonely

without my little daughter. So I turned down the gas, and went to my room. Then I slept that night like the dead. I am much nearer my goal than I was before.

"I have read the last two pages with incredulity. Have I been the victim of some terrible illusion? I dared not inquire. I made my way to the office of the *Daily Chronicle* and examined the files. It is certain that my old friend has been killed. It is certain that the manner of his killing coincides with the description written by me in this book. The more I think about it, the more positive I am that all written here is accurate. But I find no expressions of horror or fear. In my heart, to tell the truth, I feel little horror now. My old friend dead! I know that such intelligence should fill me with unspeakable sorrow. At this moment I should be suffering the wildest remorse. Yet it is not so. I feel nothing but astonishment. How odd it is that the most peculiar events will seem familiar and natural when they really come. I wonder if it would not be better—safer—if Margaret were to go away.

"There is a reporter on the *Chronicle*, who is a prying, impertinent fellow. It is very curious if I can not visit my own dog kennel without having him at my heels. I could tell him something that would make him more cautious. If it is necessary, I will illustrate my remarks. He is trying to get acquainted with my daughter Margaret. He may be sorry for it yet. I want no conspiracies about me. * * * * *

"I find no comfort in writing now. I have discovered some curious things. If the world were not so miserable—if there were not so much law—what am I trying to say? Is it law that makes crime? Those were great days that the cave-dwellers lived in. Then a man who knew how to kill was given his proper place. He was a leader.

"Peace again! And at a small price. He was a miserable creature. I saw starvation and fear in his face. He was foot-sore and half naked. Now he will not feel the cold any more. He is at rest. And I can sleep again. I shall be very merciful in the future to all who come before me charged with crime. Crime does not mean what men think it does. It is often disguised philanthropy.

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"That reporter has been up here again. He is the most impertinent knave I have ever seen. And he came much nearer than he knew to meeting with me in a way that would not have pleased him. Oh, God! Oh, God! Curse him! Hide me safely! Curse him! Or let me tear out his tongue and his eyes. I wonder why people suffer so? I have seen so many suffer. My heart had bled for years. And now I am suffering for my own troubles, and not for those of others.

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"That was a queer freak that Margaret took—to go to Tillingham Marshes. Yet I was not unwilling. I had a terrible scare just before—but if she had suffered it would have been her own fault. It

seems that I cannot even quietly sharpen a knife without having her bounce in on me. I was very angry at first. But she is so sweet I could not do without her—no, I could not. The house is very lonely now; it does not seem like the same place since she is gone. I miss her singing so—that was so beautiful always. I spent part of last night in walking the streets. There is no use in staying in the house when the servants allow such strange people to get behind the curtains in the bedroom. They are there every night, and they carry knives. But after I got on the street I heard the cry of a poor mother whose boy I once sent to the penitentiary. It moaned in my ears like the wind. That was almost as bad as the strangers in the bedroom.

"My feet stuck in the cold, yielding mud of the road. The wind was bitter, and played sorry tricks. But I went where destiny took me. Oh, but the thirst was terrible! I broke the ice on a muddy pool and drank from it. I never realized before how long it took to reach the marshes. It was a fierce walk. I did not mind the cold. But what a disappointment awaited me! I have not the courage to recount the finding of the empty bed, the flash of the light, and the wild fear that took possession of me. I thought at first that these strange creatures who lurk behind the curtains at home had followed me. So I ran through those solitary marshes for hours. When the whistles blew, I was not far from the town. I went to the station and

waited. On the train was the reporter. If he had thrown a glove in my face, he could not have challenged me more directly to mortal combat. He or I must fall soon. I think he will be the one. It has occured to me that he may know where Margaret is.

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"For days I have been looking for Margaret. Day and night I have searched for her. Yet I dare tell no one she is missing—my poor girl. The fever and the thirst are gone now. I think only of my poor child, whom I have driven from home—which was yet not a protection for her. How am I accursed! I am afraid to pray. In what danger is she now? She is as innocent as a child.

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"I have not had the courage to write for many days. But I have found Margaret. I wish to merely record that glad fact.

"There is no doubt now but that Harry will be tried. I have dreaded to put the word in writing before me here. I attached comparatively little importance to his arrest. Yet I could not bear to let Margaret see or hear of him, for fear they might do too much investigating. I thought it would be much better for our safety at present if she would listen to McCook, who has been anxious to pay his addresses to her for a long time. But if he is really to be tried I must play the farce through to the end. Some help will come to him no doubt, however. I shall perhaps warn the jury

against circumstantial evidence. But in the eye of the law I am not obliged to say anything to criminate myself. So I can do nothing but wait. I cannot get at the secret of Harry's indifference. There is something in it that I do not understand. I suspect at times that the reporter is at the bottom of it.

"My brain is giving way! Harry is so patient and pale. Margaret comes and looks like a maid of Arc at the stake. Had I better turn the knife against myself? I could not do the other thing that is on my mind—I could not. Margaret! My poor love! You can not guess how my heart is bleeding. The stupid fools those jurors are! If one of them took the trouble to look into my face he could see the truth. The speech for the defense was very weak. God help us all.

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"It is all ended. I am here with Margaret in this solitude. I see myself now with sane eyes. Something seems to have given away in my brain. The thirst has gone too. I know myself for what I am. Oh, God! That this should be! I will pray day and night. It is all I can do. But if my reason is spared, I may yet make reparation. Heaven keep Margaret from all evil—protect her from ill—from me! * * * *

"This work acts like soporific. * * *

"I think I felt a touch of the old feeling. Dear God, not that!"

This was his last entry. It was made three weeks before his death. Margaret dropped the book at midnight. Her eyes seemed to be sunken in her head, her lips were swollen and parched. As she tried to reach the bed, she stumbled and fell.

CHAPTER XXVII.

The May morning awoke as rosy as a child from perfect sleep. The full whistle of the robin in the popular grove thrilled the air, and the slow prairie streamlet sang to the sun in gladness of spirit. It was not the morning to lie in a death-like stupor on the floor; not the morning for a maid to die of grief. Yet Margaret lay where she had fallen, one cold hand reaching the counterpane on the bed above her, the other stretched out on the floor. The ill-smelling lamp burned low, the curtains hid the glorious day, the fast-shut window kept out every perfume of the morning.

The purple had not faded from the sky, when the bony servant who performed the tasks of the house was awakened by a knock at the smithy door. Having an attack of "nerves," consequent upon the happenings of the last few days, she was afraid to venture to the door alone, and in a neglige more modest than graceful, made her way to the door of that modern Vulcan, Peter, who slept in the house to impart reassurance to the "females," as he designated them. Peter arose—literally—to the occasion—and with the bony servant close behind, to fortify him with her encouraging ejaculations, made his way to the great cross-barred door below stairs.

"Whose there?" bawled Peter, while the "female"

clutched one dangling suspender that he had not had time to fasten.

"A gentleman to see Miss Bar—the smith's daughter," was the reply, from a voice from the outside, in a voice that betrayed some impatience.

"Don't think she's ris yet," said Peter, resenting the impatience and making no effort to undo the bars.

"That is no reason why I should not be let in," said the voice with an arrogant intonation, or what Peter considered such.

"Who be ye?" cautiously inquired Peter. "We ain't lettin' folks see the missus these days."

"I am a relative of hers, man. I have come from Chicago. For heaven's sake let me in. What do you think I am going to do? Rob the house?"

"Now, neighbor, now, neighbor," reiterated Peter soothingly, "don't ye get riled. But if ye excuse my sayin' so, I don't think ye air acquainted none to well with the name of the missus."

"If you don't let me into this old shanty, I will break the door in," intemperately cried the voice, the owner of which realized that he was baffled at this point.

"Tell me her name," demanded Peter, determined to stand upon his rights.

"Well, then," said the voice outside, "she is known in the city by the name of Margaret Barthwait. If she has taken another here, I do not know what it is. But what ever her name may be, I want to see her, and she wants to see me."

"Really," sneered Peter, while the bony servant summoned her wits sufficiently to send out a sneering laugh as an accompaniment.

The reply to this was a blow against the door with a crow-bar, which had stood since the immemorial beside the bench without. The point of it pierced the wood at the first blow. At the second, three boards were splintered from end to end. But before a third had time to fall Peter swung the bar in token of capitulation. The sudden opening of the door was not expected by the young man outside, who had raised the bar for another onslaught, and consequently was precipitated into the smithy head first, while the bar flew from his hands across the dim apartment.

Peter and his associate greeted this entertainment with appreciative jibes. The young man, with a somewhat shamed faced expression, resumed his equilibrium and looked aorund.

"I presume the young lady has other apartments," said he.

"The living rooms are up stairs," vouchsafed Peter. His eye indicated the stairway, and, before he could add more, the extraordinary visitor had sprung up them and down the hall to the first open door. The amazed servants heard him opening door after door, now knocking, now calling "Margaret," and now— .

Now there was silence! Then a call! Peter rushed upstairs, followed by the affrighted maid.

He found the mysterious visitor trying to lift the lifeless form of his mistress to the bed.

"Bring me restoratives," gasped the stranger with white lips; "camphor, ammonia, water—whatever you have, and one of you go for the doctor." Then he fell to rubbing her hands and kissing her cold face.

"Between them they have murdered you, my love," he sobbed, losing all presence of mind and lavishing a thousand caresses upon her. "I have come too late to save you! I deserve it, I know! My love, my love!" Moaning and gesticulating he walked about the room, wondering why no one came to his aid and alternately certain that she was dead and that she was not.

She might be, but she could open her sad eyes, and looking at him, could let a life-light dawn in them; could reach out feeble arms, and sigh with contentment, and a sense of safety, and slip off to dreams. Once assured that she still lived, the young man's senses returned to him. He found water and bathed her cold forehead, he chafed her hands, and throwing wide the window and the curtains, let the sweet morning breeze sweep in, and over her. Under its influence she sat up with a dazed joy in her eyes, and feasted on the face of the man who stood over her, with the tears dropping even as she tried to smile. Then she lay back softly on the pillow, while he folded her in his arms, kneeling by the bed, and so stayed, with his lips on her forehead.

Then came up the bony servant bearing the now needless bottle of ammonia, and Peter with a plethoric physician, who insisted on prescribing. And they had to be submitted to in patience. But when they were gone, Margaret said:

"A train goes at noon, Harry, can we take it?"

"Are you able to travel, my dear? Would you not better rest till to-morrow?"

"Rest!" she cried, putting back his arms and standing erect. "Do you think there can be any rest for me here? Not even with you. For weeks I have lived here in torment worse than death. At night I have feared what the morning would bring forth, and in the morning I have wondered if night would fall without disaster. There has been no one, Harry, no one, to whom I could confide a single misery. I thought I should never see you again. And I was glad too, for I could not think of having you endure the shame."

"You make me most unhappy dear. Do not misinterpret your sad experiences. Promise me you will not. Be faithful to your better and happier self. I beg that you will not use that word again. What does anything matter now? Are we not together?"

"There are some little business matters to attend to, Harry, before I go. There is the smithy, for instance. Peter, the good lad who let you in—"

"Good lad, indeed," muttered Harry. "Let me in, did he? I should say he did."

"Well, he has a bit of money saved up, so he

confided to me. It is about half as much as we paid for this wretched place. I would willingly give him the place, but he would not take it, and his pride would be hurt. If he is allowed to think that he has made a good bargain he will be very proud and pleased."

"He shall be permitted to think himself a real estate shark, if you choose."

"Then I have nothing to wear, Harry—nothing but the strange garments I have worn as a disguise."

"Cover yourself with that long cloak. We can secure apartments on the car, and once in the city a carriage will be protection enough till the dressmakers can be reached."

"Then the things I have here shall be given to Sally—all but papa's things. Tell Peter to burn them Harry. And Harry, here is a—a diary. It is written by papa. You can guess what it contains. Shall I keep it?"

"Do as you think best, love."

"Then I will keep it for awhile. It is his defense in a way, for it shows that madness was the source of his crimes. Oh, Harry. he changed so! It has been so terrible!"

But there was comfort now, in the arms of her lover. Not the gay old lover of other days, to be sure, but it was the same true heart, the same true hand-clasp, the same winning smile. And yet for a time, reunion did not bring to either of them the joy they had imagined it would when they had dreamed of it through the dark days that had

passed. Circumstances had made them strangers in a sense, and it needed close communion to perfectly harmonize their hearts.

All was so strange now, so shadowed with terrors, that they dared hardly whisper: "I love you," lest a blight should fall on the love thus consecrated.

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Ten hours later a carriage drew up in front of a south side hotel, and a lady swathed from head to foot in a long black cape, was assisted up the stairs to a room above. As she lay back in an easy chair, letting the wind that came from the open window cool her hot forehead, her garments made an almost comical contrast with her surroundings.

Had she studied to be hideous they could not have been worse in color or cut, or more at variance with her own delicate personality.

"To-morrow," she said softly, smiling down at them, "we must have a dressmaker."

"To-morrow," said he, "we shall have a wedding."

"It sounds horrible," she cried, burying her face in her hands, "but it does not seem to me that any joy can come of our marriage. I do not think I can love you as I used to, Harry."

"My dear," he whispered, bending over her, "I do not care whether you love me or not. We will be married to-morrow. Do not love me till you are ready. Take this wine, and do not speak again. I shall leave you now. Ring the bell if you want anything."

"Do not leave the house, Harry," she protested tearfully.

"Hush, dear, I will not. Sleep without fear. I shall be so near that if you cry, I shall hear you."

"How did you know where I was, Harry?"

"A strange garbled account came to the office of the *Chronicle*. An account, I mean of the—suicide. Pond thought of you at once. He sent for me. I thought as he did, that the mysterious smith and his daughter, whom no one knew, must be you. As I journeyed, I grew more sure of it, so that when I reached your place, I had no doubt that it was my own sad love I would find in that dull old building."

He kissed her gently—without passion—and left her. She wearily took off her clothes, and laying in the broad cool bed, slept without fear for the first time in many weeks.

"Let me in, let me in. It is I, your little damsel. It is Jeanne. Unfasten the door!"

This plea, shrilled out in a vioce that aroused the curiosity of all the boarders, startled Margaret from her slumber. The day was already half gone, and the noon sun peered around the edges of the curtains.

The little damsel looked as dainty as a flower. A bewitching hat wreathed in green sat upon her curls, which were as uncompromising as ever; and on the breast of her black frock was a bunch of apple blossoms almost as large as the shining

face above. But the hat and the flowers and the gloves came off in a hurry, and she returned to her old offices. Margaret must have a bath—with a cup of chocolate first and an orange afterwards, and breakfast when she was dressed. And she must not venture out of her room until she had something to wear, and must even go into seclusion when the chambermaid appeared.

"If there is anything I do hate," cried Jeanne, "it is having servants get on to things!"

"What?" cried Margaret, feigning not to understand.

"Oh, you know perfectly well what I mean. Goodness, if it isn't nice to see you again. Such dreams as I had of you! And now everything is just as we would have it."

"Papa," began Margaret, but Jeanne stopped her.

"That is just as we would all have it, too, dear. It could be no other way and be well. His sins are forgiven I am sure, if they were sins."

"It is sweet to be with you," murmured Margaret gratefully.

"Don't wriggle," impatiently ejaculated Jeanne. "How do you expect me to put up your hair if you act like this? I have something to tell you, if only you will keep still a moment."

"I am still," said Margaret, delighted at the comfort and the peace of it all. Jeanne's magnetic touch on her head gave her new life.

"Very well then. Two weeks from to-day I am going to Europe."

"Is it possible?" cried Margaret. "Alone?"

"No," said Jeanne, intent upon the back hair of her friend. "Not alone."

"Your father is surely not going. Or, perhaps you are a companion to some one. I am jealous, Jeanne."

"Well, you have some reason to be jealous, that is a fact," confessed Jeanne. "I am going as a companion."

"I hope you know what kind of people you are going with, my dear."

"I do, perfectly. At least, it isn't people. It's a person. It's a gentleman."

"What?" cried Margaret, jerking her hair out of Jeanne's hand at the critical moment. "That is very remarkable!"

"Yes," acquiesced Jeanne, "I think so myself. Every time I think of it I am astonished. I shall sign a contract with him, of course. I would not want him to drop me if he got tired of me, and take some one else in my place."

Margaret got from her chair and laid a stern hand on each of the girl's shoulders.

"Now tell me," she said.

Gurgling and giggling, with a face as rosy as the heart of an apple-blossom, Jeanne told the truth.

"Dennis has a position on the London edition of the New York *Herald*. I must go to London with him, for I intend to go wherever he does forever after this."

"My dear, my heart is so full of joy for you that I can not speak. You love him, do you not?"

"Well, a little," laughed Jeanne. "I guess I would creep under the daisies if—if I were not going to London."

There was silence for awhile.

"I think if you do not mind, I would rather not see him, Jeanne." Margaret said at length. "I have poor papa's sufferings too fresh in my mind."

"He saved Harry's life for you," cried Jeanne indignantly.

"I know it. I am not ungrateful," protested Margaret.

"Oh, very well!" said Jeanne, smiling again. "Just as you like. Of course, if you can get along without seeing him, I can get along with having you." There was someting in her tone that made Margaret look up quickly.

"You are not going to be jealous, Jeanne, are you?" she asked.

"Of no one but you," whispered the little damsel, leaning over her. And then she went out shopping, while Margaret, having eaten, slept again among the cushions of the sofa. Her exhausted brain called for rest constantly, and no one came to disturb her. She wondered dimly where Harry was, but she was too weak to wonder long and dropped to sleep with the ease of a tired child.

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"The waters are the bluest in the world, Margaret. The sky is more brilliant than that of Italy.

The forests are such as you have never dreamed of. If you have never experienced, you can not know the perfect reverence that comes to the heart in a mighty pine forest. A perfumed carpet is spread beneath the feet, the lofty arches allow plenty of room for all the worshipers of earth to pass if they will, and above are the eternally singing trees, standing with a protective majesty. There is life in the very perfume—why, even now, Margaret, I seem to smell the resinous scents of that mighty forest. I have a hut there that is quite my own. We shall take rugs, and hammocks, and dishes, and books, and I will write my opera under the inspiration of your smile. Do not shake your head. I know you will learn to smile again there. If there is any place that can convey to the spirit a sense of the majesty of time, the foolishness of fears, and the perfect peace of nature, it is the shores of Lake Superior. Besides, Margaret, you shall learn to be a huntress. There is wonderful game, and the finest fishing on earth."

"Harry, for God's sake, not that. Do not ask me to shed blood, or to look upon it! Let the free creatures go. We shall see the birds in that blue sky, the fish gleaming in those transparent waters, and find them beautiful. We will not destroy their beauty—not if you love me, Harry. Not if you would cure me!"

"Forgive me, love. Try to forget. We will live in peace and let others do the same."

"I have sent my wedding present to Jeanne. It

is finery. I know she loves it, and that she will need it, and the paternal purse is small. I am glad they are going away for a time, Harry. When we meet again, this strange feeling I have toward Mr. Pond will have disappeared. I am so glad he loves Jeanne."

"There will be no one to give us wedding presents," said Harry, half regretfully. "I do not believe that anyone will even think to cry good luck after us."

But he was mistaken. The morning of the wedding, which Margaret had succeeded in postponing a week, as they left Grace Church together, a party of young people came dashing to hinder them.

"I guess you thought we didn't care what had become of you," cried a familiar voice. "But we ain't as rattle-headed as we seem. We are glad and happy to know your troubles are over with, we are. Let me kiss you, my dear." It was Tessie Thompson, the "actress" of Walnut street, and with her was the undertaker, and young Barnum, in a tight suit of clothes, and his proud mother, as well as the old landlady—the landlady of the Misses Browne.

"And where is your sister that was or that pretended to be," cried Mrs. Barnum, kissing Margaret with motherly fervor. "She was the sweetest little thing I ever set eyes on."

"She is married," cried Margaret, holding on to the motherly hand, "and on her way to London. By this time she is in New York."

"Well, I wish her well," said Mrs. Barnum, "and my son wishes her well. She didn't take to him in just the way he took to her, but the heart can be coaxed, but not driv. That's what I says to him often. The heart cannot be driv."

The young undertaker said something about a flowing sheet, which was at once apropos to Jeanne's sea voyage, and his business. But he got a smile and a hand-clasp from Margaret that covered his confusion, although it was calculated to wound later, when he was alone, and to make him wish he was in one of his own superior coffins, with the satin puffings around him. The undertaker had a very low opinion of life as an institution, since he met Margaret.

"We've all brought you presents," said Tessie, blushing. "And though I am sure you will not think them much, we felt that we wanted to bring a little, you know."

The presents were delivered, done up in neat parcels, and were placed in the carriage with the heartfelt thanks of Margaret. Mrs. Barnum had brought some rice to throw after the carriage, and didn't forget to perform her duty. There were two carriages of newspaper boys, who rode behind. And these good fellows had been the only witnesses of the wedding.

"Spare me," Harry begged of them, "for old time's sake."

So the marriage received no record, except as appeared in the record of the County Clerk. There

was an odd little dinner at the Richelieu, and the guests made merry with Harry's old jokes repeated by them at second hand, and they told the bride she was beautiful with the most confiding candor.

"Out of all the friends I once had," said Harry to them, "you are the only ones that I felt sure would be glad to come to my wedding. Others might have come from a sense of duty, but I knew you would come with warmth."

It was these wedding guests who sang, "Oh, He's a Jolly Good Fellow," over their claret, and that told remarkable stories with the desert, and that presented a pair of scissors and a paste pot to Harry, to assist him in the preparation of his new opera, which was to make him famous.

Days afterward, when Margaret lay on the soft bed of pine needles, looking up through the swaying branches at the intensely blue sky, she used to hear the merry voices of her wedding guests in fancy, above the continuous solemn roar of the pines. Aside from the deep music the silence was deep. The quiet days melted into the perfect nights, until she lost all account of time. Some days were spent on the water, drifting from isle to isle, or along the mighty banks of the Northern Peninsula of Michigan. When a passing vessel threatened to discover them they took to their retreat again. They saw no one except the ever-laughing darkey who represented the necessities of life to them.

"Harry," said Margaret one day, as she lay

stretched at length in a hammock half over the water's edge. "I do not know which is more beautiful, to look across this wonderful solitude of water, or in your eyes."

"You love me as you used now, do you not, wife?"

"Not as I used, Harry. I love you as I never thought I could love any one."

"When do you want to go back to civilization?"

"I have never been able to decide what civilization means," sighed Margaret. "But I think it might be best to go to the Mediterranean in the autumn."

"Why best?"

"Because we would be happiest. We could go after your opera had been put on in New York. Then we will go to the south of France and write another."

"We?"

"Yes, I may write a book, at least."

"My love, I forbid it. Kiss me."

"Very well, then, I am your slave. Not that I mind."

A wind crept up in the tops of the trees and set them a-singing. It spread across the water, leaving a rippling of white gleams.

"It is so beautiful that I do not know how to look at it," cried Margaret. "It is holy."

"You must be speaking of yourself," returned Harry. "For that is how I should describe you."

THE END.

